

1568/1289.

THE

Belle's Stratagem;

A

NEW COMEDY,

OF

FIVE ACTS:

AS IT IS NOW PERFORMING

AT THE THEATRE IN SMOCK-ALLEY

WRITTEN BY MRS. COWLEY.

DUBLIN:

PRINTED IN THE YEAR, 1783.

1568/1289.



Dramatis Personæ.

M E N.

Doricourt,	— — —	Mr. DALY.
Flutter,	— — —	Mr. FOTTERAL.
Sir George Touchwood,		Mr. BUTLER.
Saville,	— — —	Mr. GRAHAM.
Courtall,	— — —	Mr. G. DAWSON.
Villers,	— — —	Mr. BENNET.
Hardy,	— — —	Mr. MITCHELL.

W O M E N.

Lady Frances Touchwood,		Mrs. INCHBALD.
Mrs. Racket,	— —	Mrs. MELMOTH.
Miss Ogle,	— — —	Miss GAIN.
And Letitia Hardy, Mrs. DALY.		

BELLES HAVE AT YE ALL.

SPOKEN AS A

P R O L O G U E.

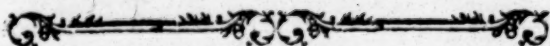
*YE sprightly Belles, who haste where pleasure's
Tripping the mazy round on light some toe, [slow,
Who seek fresh joys from ev'ry new-born day,
At balls, or routs, at opera or the play,
"Attend a moment to a sister's call,
"For well I know you,—and have at ye all."*

*A Belle, to captivating bliss awake,
Whose little heart conceals a little Rake;
Whether in Box she shines, enticing love,
In Pit or Gallery, or with the Gods above.
View her in ev'ry rank, 'midst all degrees,
She's still the same, review her as you please;
Still to some smiling joy a votive warm,
T'inviting pleasures, and to scenes that charm.*

*In Boxes, Lettices, are first I see.
Some Belles of taste, who look most charmingly.
From Fashion's luring aim, fantastic art!
New pow'rs you study to enslave the heart;
And when your beauty with each grace is seen,
You come, all dazzling to this joyous scene.
Men homage pay, while you with winning smiles,
Play all th'artillery of love-born wiles;
With softest blandishments all eyes allure,
And leave expiring swains without a cure.
The Play begun—you Belles of taste and spirit,
Attend but little to our theme or merit,
The last night's Drum affords a deal of chat;
"Lady Plume fainted there—ay! what of that?"*

T H E

Belle's Stratagem.



A C T I. S C E N E I.

Lincoln's Inn.

Enter Saville, followed by a servant, at the top of the stage, looking about as if at a loss.

Sav. **L**INCOLN's Inn. Well, but where to find, now I am in Lincoln's Inn. Where did he say his master was?

Ser. He only said in Lincoln's Inn.

Sav. That's pretty; and your wisdom never enquired at whose chambers.

Ser. Sir, you spoke to the servant yourself.

Sav. If I was too impatient to ask questions, you ought to have directions, blockhead.

Enter Courtall, singing.

Ha, Courtall! Bid him keep the horses in motion, and then enquire at all the chambers round. [*exit Servant.*] What the Devil brings you to this part of the town? Have any of the long robes, handsome wives, sisters, or chamber-maids?

Court. Perhaps they have; but I came on a different errand; and had thy good fortune brought

B

thee

thee here half an hour sooner, I'd have given thee such a treat. Ha, ha.

Sav. I am sorry I mist it; What is it?

Court. I was inform'd, a few days since, that my cousins Sallow were come to town, and desired earnestly to see me at their lodgings in Warwick-court, Holborn. Away went I, painting them all the way like so many Hebes; they came from the farthest part of Northumberland, had never been in town, and in course were made up of rusticity, innocence and beauty.

Sav. Well.

Court. After waiting thirty minutes, during which there was a violent bustle, in bounc'd five Sallow dames; four of 'em may-poles, the fifth Nature, by way of variety, had bent in the *Æsop* style; but they all open'd at once, like hounds on fresh scent—Oh, cousin Courtall—lard, cousin, I am glad you are come, we want you to go with us to the Park, and the Plays, and the Opera, and Almack's, and all the fine places—The Devil, my dears, may attend you, for I am sure I won't; however, I heroically stay'd an hour with them, and discover'd the virgins were all come to town with the hopes of leaving it wives; their heads are full of knights, baronets, fops and adventures.

Sav. Well, how did you get off?

Court. Oh, I pleaded a million of engagements; however conscience twitch'd me so, I breakfasted with them this morning, and afterwards squir'd them to the Gardens here, as the most private place in town, and then took a sorrowful leave, complaining of my hard fortune, that oblig'd me to set off immediately for Dorsetshire, ha, ha, ha.

Sav. I congratulate your escape: Courtall at Almack's, with five awkward country cousins! ha, ha, ha! why, your existence, as a man of gallantry, could never have surviv'd it.

Court. Death and fire, had they come to town like the rustics of the last age, to Paul's, the Lyons, and

and the Wax-work; at their——But the cousins of our days come up ladies, and with knowledge they glean from magazines and pocket-books; fine ladies laugh at the bashfulness of their grandmother, and boldly demand their entrance into the first circles.

Sav. Where can this fellow be? come, give me some news.

Court. Oh! Enough for three Gazettes; the ladies are going to petition for a bill, that during the war, every man may be allowed two lives.

Sav. 'Tis impossible it should pass; for the majority of both houses know what it is to have one.

Court. Gallantry was blackball'd at the Cotterie last Thursday, and Prudence and Chastity voted in.

Sav. Ay, that may hold till the camps break up; but have you elopements? no divorces?

Court. Divorces are absolutely out; and the commons Doctors starving; so they are publishing trials of crim con, with all the seperate evidence at large, which they find has always a powerful effect on their trade, actions tumbling in upon them afterwards, like mackerel at Gravesend.

Sav. What more?

Court. Nothing; for weddings, deaths, and politics I never talk of, but whilst my hair is dressing. But prithee Saville, how came you in town, whilst all the qualified gentry are playing at pop-gun on Coxheath, and the country over-run with hares and foxes?

Sav. I came to meet my friend Doricourt, who you know is lately arriv'd from Rome.

Court. Arriv'd; yes faith, and has cut us all out: his carriage, his liveries, his dress, himself, are the rage of the day! his first appearance set the whole town in a ferment, and his vallet is besieg'd by levees of taylors, habit-makers, and other ministers of fashion, to gratify the impatience of their customers becoming a-la-mode de Doricourt. Nay,

the beautiful lady Frolic to'ther night, with two sister-countesses, insisted upon his waistcoat for muffs, and their snowy arms now bear it in triumph about the town, to the heart-rending affliction of all our beau garçons.

Sav. Indeed! well those little gallantries will soon be over; he's on the point of marriage.

Court. Marriage! Doricourt on the point of marriage! 'tis the happiest tidings you could have given, next to his being hang'd; who is the bride elect?

Sav. I never saw her; but 'tis Miss Hardy; the match was made by their parents, and the courtship began on their nurses knees: master us'd to crow at miss, and miss, us'd to chuckle at master.

Court. Oh! then by this time they care no more for one another, than I do for my country cousins.

Sav. I don't know that; they never met since thus high, and so probably have some regard for each other.

Court. Never met; odd!

Sav. A whim of Mr. Hardy's; he thought his daughter's charms would make a more forcible impression, if her lover remain'd in ignorance of 'em, till his return from the Continent.

Enter Saville's servant.

Ser. Mr. Doricourt, has been at councillor Pleadwell's, and gone about five minutes.

[Exit serv.]

Sav. Five minutes; zounds, I have been five minutes too late all my life time; good morrow Courtall; I must pursue him. *(going.)*

Court. Promise to dine with me to-day; I have some honest fellows. *(going on the opposite side.)*

Sav. Can't promise you; perhaps I may; see there's a bevy of female patigonians coming down upon us.

Court. By the lord then, it must be my strapping cousins; I dare not look behind me; run man, run.

[Exit.]

SCENE

S C E N E II.

A gentle knock at the door.

A ball at Doricourt's.

Enter Porter.

Por. Tap; what sneaking devil art thou? (*opens the door.*)

Enter Crowquil.

I suppose you are one of the *monseurs* customers, he's above stairs, overhawling all his honour's things to a parcel of them.

Crow. No, sir, 'tis with you, if you please, that I want to speak.

Por. Me; well what do you want with me?

Crow. Sir, you must know that I am the gentleman that writes the *tête-a-têtes* in the magazines.

Por. Oh hoh, I Begin to smock you now; what, you are the fellow that tyes folkes nose to nose in your sixpenny cuts, that never met any where else

Crow. Oh! dear sir, excuse me; we always go on foundation; and if you can help me to a few anecdotes of your master's; such as what marchioness he lost money to at paris; who is his favourite lady in town, or the name of the girl he first made love to at college, or any incident that happened his grandmother, or great aunts; a couple will do by way of supporters; I'll weave a web of intrigues, losses and gallantries between them, that shall fill you four pages, procure me a dozen dinners, and you, sir, a bottle of wine for your trouble.

Por. Oh, ho, I have heard the butler talk of you; when I lived at my lord Trinket's; but what the devil do you mean; you gave him a crown for a retaining fee?

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Crow. Oh, fir, that was for a lord's amours; commoners are never but half; why, I have a baronet's for five shillings, tho' he was a married man, and chang'd his mistress every six weeks.

Por. Don't tell me; what signifies a barronet or a bit of a lord, who may be was never further than sun and sun round London; we have travell'd, man; my master has been in Italy, and over the whole island of Spain; talk'd with the queen of France, and danc'd with her at a masquerade; ay, such folks don't go to masquerades for nothing; but mum; not a word more; unless you'll rank my master with a lord, I'll not be guilty of blabbing his secrets, I assure you.

Crow. Well, fir, perhaps you'll throw in a hint or two of other families where you liv'd, that may be work'd up into something; and so, fir, here's one, two, three, four, five shillings.

Por. Well, that's honest; (*pocketing the money*) to tell you the truth, I don't know much of my master's concerns yet; but here comes monsieur and his gang; I'll pump them; they have trotted after him all round Europe, from the Canaries to the Isle of Wight. (*they retire back.*)

Enter several foreign servants and tradesmen

Porter takes one of them aside.

Trades. Well, then you have shew'd us all.

French. All en verite, monsieurs; you have seen every thing, serviteur, serviteur. [*Exit trades.*]

Ay, here comes an autre curious Englishman; dats an autre guinea per moi.

Enter Saville.

Allens, monsieur, dis way, I will shew you such things, as you never see, by gar, in England; velvets by le Mossie, suits cut by Verdu, trimmings by Grefsets, embroidery de tanteville.

Sav. Puppy, where is your master?

Por. Zouns, ye chattering, frog-eating dunder-head, can't you see a gentleman, 'tis Mr. Saville. (*Comes down the middle*)

French

French. Monsieur Saville, je suis mort de peur, ten thousand pardons, excusez mon erreur, and permit me to conduct to Monf. Doricourt ; he be too happy, avoize vor. *[exit Fre. and Sav.]*

Por. Step below a bit, we'll make it out some how ; I suppose a slice of firloin won't make the story go down the worse. *[exit Por. and Crowq.]*

S C È N E III.

An apartment at Doricourt's.

Enter Doricourt at the top.

Dor. (speaking to a servant) I shall be too late for St. James's ; bid him come immediately.

Enter Frenchman and Saville.

French. Monsieur Saville, Sire. *[exit]*

Dor. Most fortunate, my dear Saville, let the warmth of this embrace speak the pleasure of my heart.

Sav. Well, this is some comfort ; after the scurvy reception I met with in your hall, I prepared my mind, as I came up stairs, for a polite French congee, a bonjours, a grimace, and an adieu.

Dor. Why so ?

Sav. Judging of the master from the rest of the family. What the devil is the meaning of that flock of foreigners below, with their parchment faces and snuffy whiskers ? What, can't an Englishman stand behind your carriage, buckle your shoes, or brush your coat ?

Dor. State, my dear Saville, state : Englishmen make the best soldiers, citizens, artizans, and philosophers in the world, but the very worst footmen. I keep French fellows and Germans, as the Romans kept slaves, because their own countrymen had minds too enlarg'd and haughty to descend, with a grace, to the duties of such a station.

Sav.

Sav. A good excuse for a bad practice.

Dor. On my honour, experience will convince you of its truth; a Frenchman neither hears, sees, nor breaths, but as his master directs, and his whole system of conduct is comprized in one short word, *Obedience*. An Englishman reasons, forms opinions, cogitates and disputes; one is the mere creature of your will, the other a being, conscious of equal importance in the universal scale with yourself, and is therefore your judge, whilst he wears your livery, and decides on your actions, with the freedom of a censor.

Sav. And this in defence of a custom I have heard you execrate, together with all the adventitious manners imported by our travell'd gentry.

Dor. Ay, but was at eighteen; we are always very wise at eighteen; but consider this point: we go into Italy, where the sole business of the people is to study, and improve the power of music; we yield to the fascination, and grow enthusiasts in the charming science; we travel over France, and see the whole kingdom composing ornaments, and inventing fashions; we condescend to avail ourselves of their industry, and adopt their modes; we return to England, and find the nation intent on the most important objects—policy, commerce, war, with all the liberal arts, employ her sons; the latent sparks glow afresh within our bosoms, the sweet follies of the Continent please imperceptibly, whilst senators, statesmen, patriots, and heroes, emerge from the virtù of Italy, and the frippery of France.

Sav. I may as well give it up; you had always the knack to place your faults in the best light; and I can't help loving you, faults and all; so to start a subject that must please you, when do you expect Miss Hardy?

Dor. Oh, the hour of expectation's past; she's arriv'd, and I this morning had the honour of an interview at Pleadwell's; the writings were ready,

and, in obedience to the will of Mr. Hardy, we met to sign and seal.

Sav. Has the event answer'd? did your heart leap or sink when you beheld your mistress?

Dor. Faith, neither one nor to'ther; she's a fine girl, as far as mere flesh and blood goes, but—

Sav. But what?

Dor. Why, she's only a fine girl, complexion, shape, and features—nothing more.

Sav. Is not that enough?

Dor. No; she should have spirit, fire, lair en jour, that something—that nothing—which every body feels, and nobody can describe—in the resistless charms of France and Italy.

Sav. Thanks to the parsimony of my father, that kept me from travel, I would not have lost my relish for true unaffected English beauty, to have been quarreled for by all the belles of Versailles and Florence.

Dor. Pho, pho, thou hast no taste; English beauty, 'tis insipidity; it wants the zest; it wants poignancy, Frank; why I have known a french-woman, indebted to nature for no one thing but a pair of decent eyes, reckon in her suit, as many counts, marquisses, and petite-maitres as would satisfy three dozen of our first rate toasts. I have known an Italian marquissima make ten conquests in stepping from her carriage, and carry her slaves from one city to another, whose real intrinsic beauty would have yielded to half the little griffets that pace your mall on a Sunday.

Sav. And has miss Hardy nothing of this?

Dor. If she has, she was pleas'd to keep it to herself; I was in the room half an hour before I could catch the colour of her eyes; and every attempt to draw her into conversation occasion'd so cruel an embarrassment, that I was reduc'd to the necessity of news, French fleets and Spanish captures with her father.

Sav.

Sav. So miss Hardy, with only beauty, modesty, and merit, is doom'd to the arms of a husband who will despise her.

Dor. You are unjust; tho' she has not inspir'd me with a violent passion, my honour secures her felicity.

Sav. Come, come, Doricourt, you know very well, that when the honour of a husband is locum tenens for his heart, his wife must be as indifferent as himself, if she is not unhappy.

Dor. Pho, pho, never moralize without spectacles; but as we are upon the tender subject, how did you bear Towchwood's carrying lady Frances?

Sav. You know I never look'd up to her with hope, and Sir George is every way worthy of her.

Dor. A-la-mode Angloize! a philosopher even in love!

Sav. Come, I detain; you seem dress'd at all points, and of course have an engagement.

Dor. To St. James's; I dine at Hardy's, and accompany them to the masquerade in the evening; but breakfast with me to-morrow, and we'll talk of our old companions, for I swear to you, Saville, the air of the Continent has not effac'd one youthful prejudice or attachment.

Sav. With an exception to the case of ladies and servants.

Dor. True; there I plead guilty, but I have never yet found any man, whom I could cordially take to my heart and call friend, who was not born beneath a British sky, and whose heart and manners were not truly English. [Exit Dor. and Sav.]

SCENE.

S C E N E IV.

An apartment at Hardy's.

Villers seated on a sofa reading.

Enter Flutter.

Flut. Ha, Villers; have you seen Mrs. Rackit? Miss Hardy I find is out.

Vill. I have not seen her yet; I have made a voyage to Lapland since I came in; [*flinging away the book*] a lady at her toilet is as difficult to be mov'd as a quaker; [*yawning*] what events have happen'd in the world since yesterday, have you heard?

Flut. Oh, yes I stopt at Pottershall's, as I came by, and there I found lord James Jessamy, Sir William Wilding, and Mr. ———; But now I think of it, you shan't know a syllable of the matter, for, I have been inform'd, you never believe above one half of what I say.

Vill. My dear fellow, somebody has impos'd upon you most egregiously; half, why I never believe one-tenth part of what you say; that is, according to the plain and liberal expression; but, as I understand, your intelligence is amusing, and, with proper translations, may be sometimes understood.

Flut. That's very hard now; I never related a falsity in my life, unless I stumbled upon it by mistake; and if it were otherwise, your dull matter-of-fact people, are infinitely oblig'd to those warm imaginations, which soar into fiction to amuse you; for positively the common events of this little dirty world, are not worthy talking about, unless you embellish them; ha, here comes Mrs. Rackit, adieu to weeds, I see she's all life; enter, madam,

madam, in all your charms ; Villers has been abusing your toilet for keeping you so long ; but, I think we are much oblig'd to it, and you.

Enter Mrs. Rackit.

Rack. How so, pray ; good morning to you both ; here's a hand a piece for you ; [*they kiss her hands, she gets in the middle.*]

Flut. How so, because [*kisses her hand*] because it has given you so many beauties.

Rack. Delightful compliments ; what do you think of that, Villers ?

Vill. That he and his compliments are both alike, shew, but won't bear examining ; so you brought Miss Hardy to town last night.

Rack. Yes, I should have brought her before, but had a fall from my horse, that confin'd me a week ; I suppose, in her heart she wish'd me hang'd a dozen times in an hour.

Flut. Why ?

Rack. Had she not an expecting lover in town all the time ; she meets him this morning at the lawyer's, I hope she'll charm him, she's the sweetest girl in the world.

Vill. Vanity, like murder, will out ; you have convinc'd me, you think yourself more charming.

Rack. How can that be ?

Vill. No woman ever praises another, unless she thinks herself superior to her in the very perfection she allows.

Flut. Nor no man ever rail'd at the sex, unless he's convinc'd he deserves their hatred.

Rack. Thank you Flutter, I'll owe you a bouquet for that ; I am going to visit the new married lady Frances Touchwood ; who knows her husband ?

Flut. Every body.

Rack. Is there not something odd in his character ?

Vill.

Vill. Nothing, but that he's passionately fond of his wife; and so petulant is his love, that he open'd the cage of a favourite bull-finch, and sent it to catch butterflies, because she rewarded his song with kisses.

Rack. Intolerable monster!

Vill. Nay, nay, nay, this is your fex now; give a woman but one stroke of character, off she goes, like a ball from a racket; fees the whole man, marks him down for an angel or a devil, and so exhibits him to her acquaintance. This monster, this brute, is one of the worthiest fellows upon earth; sound sense and liberal mind, but doats on his wife to such excess, that he quarrels with every thing she admires, and is jealous of her tippet, and of her nosegay.

Rack. Oh! less love for me kind Cupid, I can see no difference between the torment of such an affection, and hatred.

Flut. Oh! pardon my inconceivable indifference—inconceivable—I see it clearly as your bracelet. In one case a husband would say, as Mr. Snapper said to'ther day, zounds, madam, do you suppose, that my table, and my house, and my pictures—apropos, there was the divinest plague of Athens, sold yesterday at Langford's; the dead figures so natural, you would have sworn they had been alive—Lord Primrose said five hundred^l; six, said my lady Carmine; a thousand said Ingot the Nabob; down went the hammer; a rouleau for your bargain, said Sir Jeremy Ingle; and what answer do you think Ingot made him?

Rack. Why, took the offer.

Flut. Sir, I would oblige you, but I buy this picture to place in the nursery; the children have already got Whittington and his cat; 'tis just this size, and they'll make good companions.

Rack. Well, I protest that's just the way now the Nabobs and their wives outbid one at every sale, and the creatures have no taste.

Vill. There again, you forgot this story is told by Flutter, who always remembers every thing but the circumstances, and the persons he talks about: 'twas Ingot that offer'd a rouleau for the bargain; and Sir Jeremy who made the reply.

Flut. Egad, I believe you are right; well, the story is as good one way as to'ther; good morning: I am going to Mrs. Crotchet's concert; and in my way back will make my bow at Sir George's. (*going*)

Vill. I'll venture every figure in your taylor's bill you make some blunder there.

Flut. [*turning back*] Done, my taylor's bill has not been paid these two years, and I'll open my mouth with as much care as Mrs. Bridget Button, who wears cork plumpers in each cheek, and never hazards more than six words, for fear of shewing 'em. [*Exit.*]

Rack. 'Tis a good natur'd insignificant creature, let in every where, and car'd for no where; there's Miss Hardy return'd from Lincoln's-inn; she seems rather chagrin'd.

Vill. Then I'll leave you to your communications.

Enter Lettitia, followed by the maid.

Adieu; I am rejoic'd to see you so well madam; but I must tear myself away.

Let. Don't vanish in a moment. [*maid brings a chair*].

Vill. Oh inhuman, you are two of the most dangerous women in town; staying here to be cannonaded by four such eyes, is equal to an encounter with Paul Jones, or a midnight march to Oma. They swallow the nonsense for the sake of the compliment. (*aside.*) [*Exit Villers.*]

Let. [*gives her cloak to her maid*] Order Du Quesne never to come again, he shall positively dress me no more, [*sits, exit maid*] and this odious silk, how

how unbecoming it is; I was bewitch'd to chuse it; did you ever see such a fright as I am to-day?

Rack. Yes, I have seen you look much worse.

Let. How can you be so provoking? if I do not look this morning worse than ever I did in my life, I am naturally a fright; you shall have it which way you will.

Rack. Just as you please, but what's the meaning of all this?

Let. [*rising*] Men are dissemblers, flatterers, deceivers; have I not heard a thousand times of my air, my eyes, my shape, all made for victory? and to-day, when I bent my whole heart upon one poor conquest, I have prov'd that all those imputed charms amount to nothing, for Doricourt saw them unmov'd; a husband of fifteen months, could not have examin'd me with more cutting indifference.

Rack. Then do you return it like a wife of fifteen months, and be as indifferent as he.

Let. Ay, there's the sting; the blooming boy, who left his image in my young heart, improv'd in every grace that fix'd him there; it is the same face that my memory, and my dreams constantly pointed to me, but its graces are finish'd, and every beauty heighten'd; how mortifying to feel myself at the same moment his slave, and an object of perfect indifference to him?

Rack. How are you certain that was the case? did you expect him to kneel before the lawyer, his clerks, and your father, to make oath of your beauty?

Let. No; but he should have look'd, as if a sudden ray had pierc'd him; he should have been breathless, speechless; for oh, Carolina! that was I.

Rack. I am sorry you was such a fool. Can you expect a man who has courted, and been courted by half the fine women in Europe, to feel like a girl from a boarding school? He is the prettiest fel-

low you have seen, and in course bewilders your imagination, and sets your senses on fire; but he has seen a million of pretty women, child, before he saw you, and his first feelings have been over long ago.

Let. Your raillery distresses me; but I will touch his heart or never be his wife.

Rack. Absurd and romantic. If you have no reason to believe his heart pre-engag'd, be satisfied; if he is a man of honour, you'll have nothing to complain of.

Let. Nothing to complain of! heavens! shall I marry the man I adore, with such an expectation as that?

Rack. And when you have fretted yourself pale, my dear, you will have mended your expectations greatly.

Let. [*pausing*] Yet I have one hope; if there is any power whose peculiar care is faithful love, that power I invoke to aid me.

Enter Hardy.

Hard. Well, was I not right? ay Letty, ay, cousin Rackit, was not I right, I knew t'would be so? he was all agog to see her, before he went abroad, and if he had, he'd have thought no more of her face, than may be of his own.

Rack. May be not half so much.

Hard. Aye, may be so; but I see into things exactly, as I foresaw to-day, he fell desperately in love with the wench; he, he, he.

Let. Indeed, sir! How did you perceive it?

Hard. That's a pretty question! how do I perceive every thing? How did I foresee the fall of corn, and the rise of taxes? how did I know that if we quarrell'd with America, Norway deals would be dear? how did I foretel that a war would sink the funds? how did I forewarn parson Homily, that if he did not some way or other contrive to get
more

more votes than Rubrick, he'd lose the lectureship? how did I—but what the devil makes you so dull Lettitia, I thought to have found you popping about as brisk as the Jacks of your Harpsichord?

Let. Sure, Sir, 'tis a very serious occasion.

Hard. Pho, pho, girls should never be grave? before marriage; how did you feel, cousin, before hand—aye?

Rack. Feel, why exceedingly full of cares.

Hard. Did you?

Rack. I could not sleep for thinking of my coach, my liveries, and my chairmen; the taste of cloaths I should be presented in, distracted me for a week; and whither I should be married in white or laylock, gave me the most cruel anxiety.

Let. And is it possible you felt no other care?

Hard. And pray of what sort may your cares be, Mrs. Lettitia?—I begin to foresee now, that you have taken a dislike to Doricourt.

Let. Indeed, sir, I have not.

Hard. Then what's all this melancholy about? a'nt you going to be married, and what's more, to a sensible man, and what's more to a young girl, a handsome man, and what's all this melancholy for, I say?

Rack. Why, because he's handsome and sensible; and because she's over head and ears in love with him, all which it seems your foreknowledge had not told you a word of.

Let. Fie, Caroline.

Hard. Well, come do you tell me what's the matter then, if you don't like him, hang the signing and sealing, he shan't have you then; and yet I can't say that neither, for you know that estate has cost his father and me upwards of fourscore thousand pounds; must go all to him, if you won't have him; if he won't have you indeed, it will be all your's; all that's clearly engross'd upon parchment; and the poor dear man, set his hand to it while he was dying; ah, said I, I foresee you'll never live to

see them come together; but their first son shall be christen'd Jeremiah after you, that I promise you; but come I say what is the matter, you don't like him?

Let. I fear, sir, if I must speak, I fear I was less agreeable in Mr. Doricourt's eyes, than he appear'd in mine.

Hard. There you are mistaken; for I ask'd him, and he told me he lik'd you vastly; don't you think he must have taken a fancy to her, cousin?

Rack. Why, really I think so, as I was not by.

Let. My dear sir, I am convinc'd he has not, but if there is a spirit or invention in woman he shall.

Hard. Right girl; to your toilet.

Let. It is not my toilet that can serve me, but a plan has struck me, if you will not oppose it, which flatters me with brilliant success.

Hard. Oppose it, not I indeed; what is it?

Let. Why, sir, it may seem a little paradoxical; but, as he does not like me enough, I want him to like me still less, and will, at our next interview, endeavour to heighten his indifference into dislike.

Hard. Who the devil could have foreseen that?

Rack. Heaven and earth, Lettitia! are you serious?

Let. As serious as the most important business of my life demands.

Rack. Why endeavour to make him dislike you?

Let. Because it is much easier to convert a sentiment into its opposite, than to transform indifference into a tender passion.

Rack. That may be good philosophy, but I am afraid you'll find it a bad maxim.

Let. I have the strongest confidence in it; I am inspir'd with unusual spirits, and on this hazard willingly stake my chance for happiness; I am impatient to begin my measures. *[Exit Let.]*

Hard. Can you foresee the end of this, cousin?

Rack.

Rask. No, sir, nothing less than your penetration can do that, I'm sure; and I can't stay now to consider it; I am going to call upon the Ogles, and then to lady Frances Touchwood's, and then to an auction, and then—I don't know where; but I shall be at home time enough to witness this extraordinary interview—good bye.

Hard. Well, 'tis an odd thing, I can't understand it; but I foresee Letty will have her way, and so I shan't give myself the trouble to dispute it.

End of the First Act.

A C T II. S C E N E I.

Sir George Touchwood's House.

Enter Doricourt and Sir George.

Dor. **M**ARRIED! Ha, ha. You whom I heard in Paris say such things of the sex, are in London a married man.

Sir Geo. The sex is still what it has ever been, since fashionable follies banished substantial virtues; and rather than have given my name to one of your high bred fashionable dames, I'd have cross'd the line in a fire-ship, and married a Japanese.

Der. Yet, you have married an English beauty!
yea, a beauty born in high life!

Sir Geo. True, but she has a simplicity of heart and manners that would have become the fair Hebrew damsels, toasted by the Patriarchs; and despises high life so much, from the ideas I have given her, that she'll live in it like a salamander in fire.

Dr. Oh, that the circle dans la place victoire,
cou'd witness thy extravagance. I'll fend thee off
te

to St. Evreux this night, drawn at full length, and colour'd after nature.

Sir Geo. Tell him then to add to the ridicule, that Touchwood glories in the name of husband; that he has found in one English woman, more beauty than Frenchmen ever saw; and more goodness than Frenchmen can conceive.

Dor. Well, enough of description, introduce me to this Phœnix; I come on purpose.

Sir Geo. Introduce! Oh! aye, to be sure, I believe lady Frances is engaged just now; but another time. How handsome the dog looks to-day.

[*aside.*

Dor. Another time; but I have no other time; death, this is the only hour I can command this fortnight.

Sir Geo. (*Aside.*) I am glad to hear it with all my soul; so then you can't dine with us to-day; that's very unlucky?

Dor. Oh! yes, as to dinner; yes I can, I believe, contrive to dine with you to-day.

Sir Geo. Psha! I didn't think on what I was saying; I mean't supper. You can't sup with us.

Dor. Why, supper will be rather more convenient than dinner; but you are fortunate; if you had ask'd me any other night, I cou'd not have come.

Sir Geo. You are so quick; it was not for to-night I ask'd you; to-morrow night.

Dor. Why, look you, Sir George, it is very plain, you have no inclination to let me see your wife at all; so here I sit, (*sits on a sofa*) there's my hat, and here are my legs; now I shan't stir 'till I have seen her, and I have no engagements; I'll breakfast, dine, and sup with you every day this week.

Sir Geo. Was there ever such a provoking wretch? But to be plain as you, Doricourt, I and my house are at your service; but you are a damn'd agreeable fellow; ten years younger than I am, and the women, I observe, always simper when you appear;

pear; for this reason, I had rather, when lady Frances and I are together, that you shou'd forget that we are acquainted, farther than a nod, a smile, or a how d'ye.

Dor. Very well.

Sir Geo. It is not merely yourself (*sits on the settee*) in propria persona, that I object to; but if you are intimate here, you'll make my house still more the fashion than it is, and it is already so much so, that my doors are of no use to me. I married lady Frances to engross her to myself; yet such is the blessed freedom of modern manners, that in spite of me, her eyes, thoughts, and conversation, are continually divided amongst all the flirts and coxcombs of fashion. [*rises.*]

Dor. To be sure, I confess that kind of freedom is carried rather too far; 'tis hard one can't have a jewel in one's cabinet, but the whole town must be gratified with its lustre. He shan't preach me out of seeing his wife, tho' gad I can't stay above five minutes. (*aside.*)

Sir George. Well now, that's reasonable; when you take time to reflect, Doricourt, I always observe you decide right, and therefore I hope—

Enter Servant.

Serv. Sir, my lady desires—

Sir Geo. I'm particularly engag'd.

Dor. Oh, lord! that shall be no excuse in the world, (*leaping from the sofa*) lead the way, John.

[*Exit, following the servant.*]

Sir Geo. What devil possess'd me to talk about her? Here, Doricourt. [*Running after him.*]

Enter Mrs. Racket and Miss Ogle, followed by a servant.

Mrs. Rack. Acquaint your lady that Mrs. Racket and Miss Ogle are here. [*Exit servant.*]

Miss Ogle. I shall hardly know lady Frances, 'tis so long since I was in Shropshire.

Mrs. Rack. And I'll be sworn, you never saw her out of Shropshire. Her father kept her lock'd up with

with his caterpillars and shells, and lov'd her beyond any thing, but a blue butterfly, and a petrefied frog.

Miss Ogle. Ha, ha! well, 'twas a cheap way of breeding her; you know he was very poor, tho' a lord of high spirit; tho' a virtuoso in town, her pantheons, operas, and robes de cœur, wou'd have swallowed his sea weeds, moths, and monsters, in six weeks. Sir George, I find, thinks his wife a most extraordinary creature; he has taught her to despise every thing like fashionable life, and boasts that example will have no effect on her.

Mrs. Rack. There's a great degree of impertinence in all that; I'll try to make her a fine lady, to humble him.

Miss Ogle. That's just the thing I wished.

Enter lady Frances.

Lady Fran. I beg ten thousand pardons, my dear Mrs. Racket; Miss Ogle I rejoice to see you. (*gets in the middle*) I should have come to you sooner, but I was detained in conversation by Mr. Doricourt.

Mrs. Rack. Pray make no apology; I'm quite happy that we have your ladyship in town at last. What stay do you make?

Lady Fran. A short one; Sir George talks with regret of the scenes we have left, and as the ceremony of presentation is over, will, I believe, soon return.

Miss Ogle. Sure he can't be so cruel; does your ladyship wish to return so soon?

Lady Fran. I have not the habit of consulting my own wishes; but I think if they decide, we shall not return immediately; I have yet hardly form'd an idea of London.

Mrs. Rack. I shall quarrel with your lord and master if he dares think of depriving us of you so soon. How do you dispose of yourself to-day?

Lady Fran. Sir George is going with me this morning to the mercer's to chuse a silk, and then—

Mrs.

Mrs. Rack. Chuse a silk for you! ha, ha, ha! Sir George chuses your laces too, I hope, your gloves, and your pincushions!

Lady Fran. Madam!

Mrs. Rack. I'm glad to see you blush, my dear lady Frances; these are strange homespun ways; if you do these sort of things, pray keep 'em secret; Lord bless us, if the town shou'd know your husband chuses your gowns!

Miss Ogle. You are very young, my lady, and have been brought up in solitude; the maxims you learnt among the wood nymphs in Shropshire won't pass current here, I assure you.

Mrs. Rack. Why my dear creature you look quite frightened. Come, you shall go with us to an exhibition and an auction; afterwards we'll take a turn in the Park, and then drive to Kensington; so we shall be at home by four to dress, and in the evening I'll attend you to the Pantheon.

Lady Fran. I shall be very happy to be of your party, if Sir George has no engagements.

Mrs. Rack. What do you stand so low in your own opinion, that you dare not trust yourself without Sir George? if you chuse to play Darby and Joan, my dear, you shou'd have staid in the country. 'Tis an exhibition not calculated for London, I assure you.

Miss Ogle. What, I suppose my lady you and Sir George will be seen pacing it comfortably round the Canal, arm and arm, and then go lovingly into the same carriage, dine tête-à-tête, spend the evening at picquet, and so go soberly to bed at eleven? Such a snug plan may do for an attorney and his wife; but for lady Frances Touchwood, 'tis as unsuitable as linsley-wolsey, or a bonnet, in the rooms at Bath.

Lady Fran. These are rather new doctrines to me; but my dear Mrs. Racket, you and Miss Ogle must judge of these things better than I can. As
you

you observe, I am but young, and may have caught abus'd opinions. Here is Sir George.

Enter Sir George.

Sir Geo. (aside) 'Sdeath, another room full.

Lady Fran. My love, Mrs. Racket and Miss Ogle.

Mrs. Rack. Give you joy, Sir George; we came to rob you of lady Frances for a few hours.

Sir Geo. A few hours!

Lady Fran. Oh yes, I'm going to an exhibition, and an auction, and the Park, and Kensington, and a thousand places. It is quite ridiculous, I find, for married people to be always together; we shou'd be laugh'd at.

Sir Geo. I'm astonish'd! Mrs. Racket! what does the dear creature mean?

Mrs. Rack. Mean, Sir George; what she says, I imagine.

Miss Ogle. Why, you know, Sir George, as lady Frances had the misfortune to be bred entirely in the country, she cannot be supposed to be versed in fashionable life.

Sir Geo. No; heaven forbid she shou'd; if she had, Madam, she wou'd never have been my wife.

Mrs. Rack. Are you serious?

Sir Geo. Perfectly so. I shou'd never have had the courage to have married a well bred fine lady.

Miss Ogle. Pray, Sir, what do you take a fine lady to be, that you express such a fear of her?

[sneeringly.]

Sir Geo. A being easily described, madam, as she is seen every where but in her own house; she sleeps at home, but she lives all over the town. In her mind every sentiment gives place to the lust of conquest, and the vanity of being particular; the feelings of wife and mother, are lost in the whirl of dissipation; if she continues virtuous 'tis by chance, and if she preserves her husband from ruin, 'tis by her dexterity at the card-table. Such a woman I take to be a perfect fine lady.

Mrs.

Mrs. Rack. And you I take to be an ill-natured, slanderous cynic, of two and thirty. Twenty years hence one might have forgiven such a libel. Now hear my definition of a fine lady.—She is a creature for whom nature has done much, and education more; she has taste, elegance, spirit, understanding; in her manners she is free, in her morals nice; her behaviour is undistinctly polite to her husband and all mankind; her sentiments are for the hours of retirement; in a word, a fine lady is the life of conversation, the spirit of society, the joy of the public; pleasure follows wherever she appears, and the kindest wishes attend her slumbers. Make haste, then, my dear lady Frances, commence fine lady, and force your husband to acknowledge the justness of my picture.

Lady Fran. I am sure 'tis a delightful one (*to Sir George*) How can you dislike it, Sir George? You painted fashionable life in colours so disgusting, that I thought I hated it; but on a nearer view, it seems charming; I have hitherto liv'd in obscurity; 'tis time that I should be a woman of the world; I long to begin; my heart pants with expectation and delight.

Mrs. Rack. Come, then, let us begin directly; I'm impatient to introduce you to that society which you were born to ornament and charm.

Lady Fran. Adieu, my love, we shall meet again at dinner. [*going.*]

Sir Geo. Sure I am in a dream, Fanny!

Lady Fran. (*returning*) Sir George!

Sir Geo. Will you go without me?

Mrs. Rack. Will you go without me! (*mimicking*) ha, ha, ha! what a pathetic address! Why sure you wou'd not always be seen side by side, like two beans upon a stalk. Are you afraid to trust lady Frances with me, Sir?

Sir Geo. Heaven and earth! with whom can a man trust his wife in the present state of society. Formerly there were distinctions of characters

amongst ye; every class of females had its particular description; grand-mothers were pious, aunts were discreet, old maids censorious; but now, aunts, grand-mothers, girls, and maiden gentlewomen are all the same creature; a wrinkle more or less is the sole difference between you.

Mrs. Rack. That maiden gentlewomen have lost their censoriousness, is surely not in your catalogue of grievances.

Sir Geo. Indeed it is, and rank'd amongst the most serious grievances; things went well, madam, when the tongues of three or four old virgins kept all the wives and daughters of a parish in awe. They were the dragons that guarded the Hesperian fruit, and I wonder they have not been obliged by act of parliament to resume their function.

Mrs. Rack. Ha, ha, ha! and pensioned, I suppose, for making strict enquiries into the lives and conversations of their neighbours.

Sir Geo. With all my heart; and empower'd to oblige every woman to conform her conduct to her real situation. You, for instance, are a widow; your air shou'd be sedate, your dress grave, your deportment matronly, and in all things an example to the young women grown up about you: instead of which you are dressed for conquest, think of nothing but ensnaring hearts; are a coquet, a wit, and a fine lady!

Mrs. Rack. Bear witness to what he says! a coquet! a wit! and a fine lady! who wou'd have expected an eulogy from such an ill-natur'd mortal! valour to a soldier, wisdom to a judge, or glory to a prince, is not more than such a character to a woman!

Miss Ogle. Sir George languishes for the charming society of a century and a half ago.

Sir Geo. And what is the society of which you boast! a mere chaos, in which all distinction of rank is lost in the same select party; you will often find the wife of a bishop and a sharper, an earl

earl and a fidler ; in short 'tis one univerfal masquerade, all disguis'd in the same habit and manners !

Enter Flutter and Servant.

Serv. Mr. Flutter.

[Exit servant.]

Sir Geo. Here comes an illustration ; now I defy you to tell from his appearance, whether Flutter is a privy counsellor or a mercer, a lawyer, or a grocer's 'prentice.

Flut. Oh just what you please, Sir George, so you don't make me a lord mayor ; ah, Mrs. Racket ! lady Frances your most obedient, you look—now hang me if that's not provoking, had your gown been of another colour, I should have said the prettiest thing you ever heard in your life.

Miss Ogle. Pray give it us.

Flut. I was yesterday at Mrs. Blomer's ; she was dress'd all in green ; no other colour to be seen, but that of her face and bosom ; so, says I, my dear Mrs. Bloomer, you look like a carnation just bursting from its pod !

Sir Geo. And what said her husband ?

Flut. Her husband ! why her husband laugh'd, and said a cucumber would have been a happier family.

Sir Geo. But there are husbands, Sir, who wou'd rather have corrected than amended your comparison ; I, for instance, shou'd consider a man's complimenting my wife as an impertinence.

Flut. Why what harm can there be in compliments ? Sure they are not infectious ; and if they were, you, Sir George, of all people breathing, have reason to be satisfi'd with your lady's attachment. Every body talks of it ; that little bird there, that she killed out of jealousy : the most extraordinary instance of affection that ever was given.

Lady Fran. I kill a bird thro' jealousy ! Heavens ! Mr. Flutter, how can you impute such a cruelty to me ?

Sir Geo. I cou'd have forgiven you if you had.

Flut. Oh what a blundering fool ; no, no, now I remember, 'twas your bird, lady Frances ; that's it, your bullfinch, which Sir George, in one of the refinements of his passion, sent into the wide world to seek its fortune ; he took it for a knight in disguise.

Lady Fran. Is it possible ! oh ! Sir George ! (*goes to him*) cou'd I have imagined it was you who depriv'd me of a creature I was so fond of !

Sir Geo. Mr. Flutter, you are one of those busy, idle, meddling people, who from mere vacuity of mind, are the most dangerous inmates of a family ; you have neither feelings nor opinions of your own, but, like a glass in a tavern, bear about those of every blockhead who gives you his ; and because you mean no harm, think yourselves excus'd, tho' broken friendship, discords, and murders, are the consequence of your indiscretions.

Flut. (*taking out tablets*) Vacuity of mind ; what was next, I'll write down this sermon ; 'tis the first I have heard since my grandmother's funeral.

Miss Ogle. Come, lady Frances, you see what a cruel creature your loving husband can be, so let us leave him.

Sir Geo. Madam, lady Frances shall not go.

Lady Fran. Shall not, Sir George ! This is the first time such an expression—

[*weeping.*]

Sir Geo. My love ! my life !

Lady Fran. Don't imagine I'll be treated like a baby ! denied what I wish, and pacified with sweet words.

Miss Ogle. (*apart*) The bullfinch ! that's an excellent subject, never let it down.

Lady Fran. I see plainly you wou'd deprive me of every pleasure, as well as of my sweet bird, out of pure love—barbarous man !

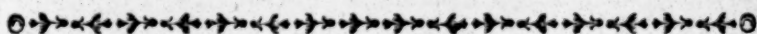
Sir Geo. 'Tis well, Madam ; your resentment of that circumstance proves to me what I did not before suspect ; that you are deficient both in tenderness and understanding. Tremble to think the
hour

one, I protest; if we don't fly to Kensington we shan't find a soul there.

Lady Fran. Pray, Mrs. Racket, don't this gentleman go with us?

Court. Certainly, madam, your permission gives me superlative happiness. (*Exit the ladies*) Lady Touchwood, with a vengeance; but your reserv'd women, like ice, egad, no sooner begin to soften, than they melt. [*Exit.*]

End of the Second Act.



ACT III. SCENE I.

An Apparement at Hardy's.

Enter Lettitia and Mrs. Racket.

Mrs. Rack. **C**OME, prepare, prepare, your lover is coming.

Let. My lover! confess now, that my absence at dinner was a severe mortification to him.

Mrs. Rack. I can't absolutely swear it spoil'd his appetite; he eat as if he was hungry, and drank his wine as tho' he lik'd it.

Let. What was the apology?

Mrs. Rack. That you were ill; but I gave him a hint that your extreme bashfulness could not support his eye.

Let. If I comprehend him, awkwardness and bashfulness are the least faults he can pardon in a woman; so expect to see me transformed, into the veriest Miss Mawkin.

Mrs. Rack. You persevere then?

Let. Certainly; I know the design is a rash one, and the event important; it either makes Doricourt mine,

mine, by all the tenderest ties of passion, or deprives me of him for ever; and never to be his wife, will afflict me less, than to be his wife and not to be lov'd.

Mrs. Rack. So you won't trust to the good old maxim, "marry first, and love will follow?"

Let. As ready as I would stake my last guinea, that good fortune might follow. The woman who has not touch'd the heart of a man before he leads her to the altar, has scarcely a chance to charm it, when possession and security turn their powerful arms against her; but here he comes.—I'll disappear for a moment.—Don't spare me. [*Exit.*]

Enter Doricourt, not seeing Mrs. Racket.

Dor. So this is my mistress, I presume; Ma Foi, the painter, has hit her off; the down-cast eye, the blushing cheek, timid, apprehensive, bashful; a tear and a pray'r book, wou'd have made her La Belle Magdalina.

Give me a woman, in whose touching mein,
A mind, a soul, a polish'd art is seen;
Whose motion speaks, whose poignant air can move;
Such are the darts, to wound with endless love.

Mrs. Rack. Is that an impromptu?

Dor. Ma'm, (*starting*) finely caught! (*aside*) not absolutely; struck me during the desert, as a motto for your picture.

Mrs. Rack. Gallantly turn'd! I perceive however, Miss Hardy's charms has made no violent impression on you, and who can wonder, the poor girl's defects are so obvious?

Dor. Defects!

Mrs. Rack. Merely those of education; her father's indulgence ruin'd her; mauvaise honte, conceit and ignorance all unite in the lady you are to marry.

Dor. Marry! I marry such a woman; your picture, I hope, is overcharg'd; I marry mauvaise honte! pertness and ignorance!

Mrs.

Mrs. Rack. Thank your stars, that ugliness and ill-temper are not added to the list; you must think her handsome.

Dor. Half her personal beauties wou'd content me; but cou'd the Medician Venus be animated for me, and endow'd with a vulgar soul, I shou'd become the statue, and my heart transform'd to marble.

Mrs. Rack. Bless us; we are in a happy way then.

Dor. There must be some envy in this; she's a coquet, (*aside*) ha, ha, ha! and you imagine I'm persuaded of the truth of your character? ha, ha! Miss Hardy, I've been assur'd, madam, is elegant and accomplish'd; but one must allow for a lady's painting.

Mrs. Rack. I'll be even with him for that, (*aside*) ha, ha, ha! and so you have found me out? well, I protest I mean't no harm; 'twas only to encrease the eclat of her appearance, that I throw a veil over her charms. Here comes the lady; her elegance and accomplishments will announce themselves.

Enter Lettitia, running.

Let. Laws, Cousin, do you know that our John— oh! dear heart! I didn't see you, Sir—

[*Hanging down her head, and dropping behind*

Mrs. Racket.

Mrs. Rack. Fy, Lettitia; Mr. Doricourt thinks you a woman of elegant manners; stand forward, and confirm his opinion.

Let. No, no! keep before me; he's my sweetheart, and 'tis impudent to look one's sweetheart in the face, you know.

Mrs. Rack. You'll allow, in future, for a lady's painting, Sir, ha, ha!

Dor. I'm astonish'd!

Let. Well, hang it, I'll take heart; why he is but a man, you know, cousin, and I'll let him see, I was
not

not born in a wood to be fear'd by an owl; (*half a part advances, and looks at him thro' her fingers*) he, he, he! (*goes up to him, and makes a very stiff formal curtsy*) You have been a great traveller, Sir, I hear?

Dor. Yes, madam.

Let. Then I wish you'd tell us about the fine fights you saw when you went over sea. I have read in a book, that there's some countries where the men and women are all horses! did you see any of them?

Mrs. Rack. Mr. Doricourt is not prepared, my dear, for these enquiries; he is reflecting on the importance of the question, and will answer you when he can.

Let. When he can? why he's as slow in speech as aunt Margery, when she's reading Thomas Aquinas, and stands gaping like—Mumchance.

Mrs. Rack. Have a little discretion.

Let. Hold your tongue; sure I may say what I please before I am married, if I can't afterwards; do you think a body don't know how to talk to a sweet-heart; he is not the first I never had.

Dor. Indeed!

Let. He speaks—(*aside*) why not; if you must know, there was the curate at home, when papa was a hunting, he us'd to come a fuitoring, and make speeches to me out of books: nobody knows what a mort of fine things he us'd to say to me, and call'd me Venus! and Juba! and Dinah!

Dor. And pray, fair lady, how did you answer him?

Let. Why, I us'd to say, look you, Mr. Curate, don't think to come over me with your flim-flams, for a better man than ever trod in your shoes is coming over sea to marry me; but I fegs, I begin to think I was out; parson Dobbin's was the sprightfuller man of the two.

Dor. Surely, this cannot be Miss Hardy!

Let.

Let. Laws, why don't you know me? You saw me to-day, but I was daunted before my father and the lawyer, and all them, and did not care to speak out; so may be you thought I could not, but I can talk as fast as any body, when I knows folks a little: and now I've shewn my parts, I hope you'll like me better.

Enter Mr. Hardy.

Mr. Hardy. I foresee this won't do, Mr. Dori-court! may be you take my daughter for a fool, but you are mistaken; she's as sensible a girl as any in England.

Dor. I am convinc'd she has a very uncommon understanding, Sir. I did not think he'd been such an ass. (*aside.*)

Let. My father will undo the whole; (*aside*) laws, papa, how can you think he can take me for a fool, when every body knows I beat the potecary at conundrums last Christmas time; an didn't I make a string of names all in riddles for the lady's diary. There was a little river and a great house, that was Newcastle; there was what a lamb says, and three letters—that was ba! and k e r, Baker!

Hardy. Ba! zouns! you'll make me mad in a moment! I tell you, Sir, that for all this, she's devilish sensible!

Dor. Sir, I give all possible credit to your assertions. (*biting his nails.*)

Let. Laws, papa, do come along; if you stand watching, how can my sweet-heart break his mind, and tell me how he admires me?

Dor. That wou'd be difficult indeed, madam.

Hardy. I tell you, Letty, I'll have no more of this; I see well enough——

Let. Laws, don't snub me before my husband that is to be; you'll teach him to snub me too; and I believe, by his looks, he'd like to begin now, so let us go cousin; you may tell the gentleman what a genius I have; how I can cut watch-papers, work

cat-gut, make quadril baskets with pins, and take profiles in shades ; ay, as well as the lady at No. 62, South Molton-street, Grosvenor-square.

[*Exit, with Hardy pulling him.*]

Mrs. Rack. What think you of my painting now?

Dor. Oh! mere water colours, madam! the lady has caricatur'd your picture!

Mrs. Rack. And how does she strike you on the whole?

Dor. Like a good design, spoil'd by the incapacity of the artist; her faults are evidently the result of her father's weak indulgence; I observ'd expression in her eye, that seem'd to satirise the folly of her lips.

Mrs. Rack. But at her age, when education is fix'd, and manner becomes nature, hopes of improvement.—

Dor. Wou'd be as rational, as hopes of gold from a jugler's crucible.

Mrs. Rack. I'm pleas'd your misfortune fits no heavier.

Dor. Your pardon, madam; so mercurial was the hour in which I was born, that misfortunes always go plump to the bottom of my heart, like a pebble in water, and leave the surface unruffled; I shall certainly set off for Bath, or the other world to-night; but whether I shall use a chaise with four swift couriers, or go off in a tangent from the aperture of a pistol, deserves consideration! so I make my adieus!

Mrs. Rack. Oh! but I entreat you postpone your journey 'till to-morrow, determine on which you will; you must be this night at the masquerade.

Dor. Masquerade!

Mrs. Rack. Why not; if you resolve to visit the other world, you may as well take one night's pleasure in this, you know.

Dor. Faith, that's very true; ladies are the best philosophers after all; expect me at the masquerade,

[*Exit.*]

Mrs.

Mrs. Rack. He's a charming fellow; I think Lettitia shan't have him. [going.

Enter Hardy.

Hardy. What! he's gone!

Mrs. Rack. Yes; and I am glad he is, you wou'd have ruin'd us. Now I beg, my dear Mr. Hardy, you won't interfere in this business; it is a little out of your way. [Exit.

Hardy. Hang me if I don't; tho' I foresee very clearly what will be the end of it if I leave you to yourselves; so I'll e'en follow him to the masquerade, and tell him all about it; let me see, what shall my dress be? A great Mogul! no. A grenadier! no; that I foresee won't make a laugh. Hang me if I don't send to little Quick, he's about my make, and borrow his Jew Isaac's dress; aye, that's it, I'll be cunning little Isaac; if they complain of my want of wit, I'll tell 'em the curs'd Duenna wears the breeches, and has spoil'd my parts. [Exit.

S C E N E at Courtall's.

Enter Courtall, Saville, and four others, from an apartment in the back scene; the three last tipsy.

Court. You shan't go yet; another catch and another bottle.

1st Gen. May I be a bottle, and an empty bottle, if you catch me at that; why I am going to the masquerade, Jack; you know who I mean is to meet me, and we are to have a leap at the new lustres.

2^d Gen. And I am going too; a Harlequin; am not I in a pretty pickle to make Harlequinade? and Toney here he's going in the disguise of a gentleman.

1st Gen. We are all very well disguis'd; so bid 'em draw up, d'ye hear. [Exit three gentlemen.

Sav. Thy scull, Courtall, is a lady's thimble; no, an eggshell.

Court. Nay then, you are gone too; you never aspire to smiles, but in your cups.

Sav. No, no, I'm steady enough; but the fumes of the wine pass directly thro' the eggshell, and leave thy brain as cool as—I am quite sober; my smiles fail me.

Court. Then we'll sit down here, and have one sober bottle. Wine and glasses.

Sav. I'll not swallow another drop; no, tho' the juice shou'd be the true Falernian.

Court. By the bright eyes of her you love, you shall drink her health.

[They sit, and servant brings wine.]

Sav. Ah! (*sitting down*) her I lov'd is gone; she's married.

Court. Then bless your stars, you're not her husband; I wou'd be husband to no woman in Europe, that was not devilish rich and devilish ugly.

Sav. Wherefore ugly?

Court. Because she cou'd not have the conscience to exact those attentions that a pretty wife expects; or if she shou'd, her resentments wou'd be perfectly easy to me; no one wou'd undertake to revenge her cause.

Sav. Thou art a most licentious fellow.

Court. I shou'd hate my own wife, that's certain; but I have a warm heart for those of other people, and so here's the prettiest wife in England—lady Frances Touchwood.

Sav. Lady Frances Touchwood! I rise to drink her; (*rises*) how the devil came lady Frances in your head? I never knew you give a woman of chastity before!

Court. That's odd; for you (*they sit*) have heard me give half the women of fashion in England; but pray now, what do you take a woman of chastity to be?

[sneeringly.]

Sav. Such a woman as lady Frances Touchwood, Sir.

Court.

Court. Oh! you're grave, Sir; I remember you was an adorer of her's; why did'nt you marry her?

Sav. I had not the arrogance to look so high; had my fortune been worthy of her, she shou'd not have been ignorant of my admiration.

Court. Precious fellow! what, I suppose you wou'd not dare tell her now that you admire her?

Sav. No! nor you!

Court. By the lord, I have told her so.

Sav. Have! impossible!

Court. Ha, ha! is it so?

Sav. How did she receive the declaration?

Court. Why in the old way; blush'd and frown'd, and said she was married.

Sav. What amazing things art thou capable of? I could more easily have taken the pope by the beard, than prophan'd her ears with such a declaration!

Court. Ha, ha, ha! I shall meet her at the Pantheon to-night, where I shall repeat it; and I'll lay my life, under a mask, she'll hear it all without a blush or frown.

Sav. 'Tis false, Sir! she won't! (*rising*)

Court. She will; (*raises*) nay, I'd venture a good round sum, that I prevail on her to go out with me! only to taste the fresh air, I mean.

Sav. Preposterous vanity! from this moment I suspect, that half the victories you have boasted are false and slanderous as your pretended influence with lady Frances.

Court. Pretended! ha, ha, ha! how shou'd such a fellow as you now, who never soar'd beyond the Cherry cheek'd daughter of a ploughman in Norfolk, judge of the influence of a man of my figure and habits. I could shew thee a list, in which there are names to shake thy faith in the whole sex; and to that list I have no doubt of adding the name of lady ———

Sav. Hold, Sir ; my ears cannot bear the profanation ; you cannot, dare not, approach her ; for your soul, you dare not mention love to her ; her look wou'd freeze the word, while it lower'd on thy licentious lips.

Court. Well, well, we shall see ; this evening, by Jupiter, the trial shall be made ; if I fail, I fail.

Sav. I think thou darest not ; but my life, my honour, on her purity ! [*Exit.*]

Court. Hot-headed fool ; but since he has brought it to this point, by gad, I'll try what can be done with her ladyship ; (*musing, rings a bell*) she's frost work, and the prejudice of education yet strong, ergo, passionate professions, will only inflame her pride, and put her on her guard ; for other arts then—(*enter servant*) Dick, do you know any of the servants at Sir George Touchwood's ?

Dick. Yes, Sir ; I know the groom and one of the house-maids ; for matter o'that, she's my own cousin, and 'twas my mother that hoped her to the place.

Court. Do you know lady Frances's maid ?

Dick. I can't say, as how I know she.

Court. Do you know Sir George's valet ?

Dick. No, Sir ; but Sally, is very thick with Mr. Gibson, Sir George's gentleman.

Court. Then go there directly ; and employ Sally to discover, whether her master goes to the Pantheon this evening ; and if he does, the name of the shop that sold his habit.

Dick. Yes, Sir.

Court. Be exact in your intelligence ; and come to me at Boodle's. [*Exit Dick.*] If I can no otherwise succeed, I'll beguile her, as Jove did Alcmena, in the shape of her husband ; the possession of so fine a woman ; the triumph over Saville, are each a sufficient motive ; and united they shall be irresistible. [*Exit.*]

S C E N E, a Street.

Enter Saville.

Sav. The air has recover'd me; what have I been doing? Perhaps my petulance, may be the cause of her ruin, whose honour I asserted; his vanity is piqued, and when women are concern'd, Courtall can be a villain. [*Enter Dick, passing him hastily, and bowing.*] Hah! that's his servant; Dick.

Dick. (*returning*) Sir.

Sav. Where are you going, Dick?

Dick. Going, Sir; I'm going, Sir, where my master sent me.

Sav. Well answer'd; but I have a very particular reason for my enquiry, and you must tell me.

Dick. Why, then, Sir, I'm going to call upon a cousin of mine that lives at Sir George Touchwood's.

Sav. Very well; there (*gives money*) you must make your cousin drink my health; what are you going about?

Dick. Why, Sir, I believe 'tis no harm, or elseways I'm sure I would not blab; I'm only going to ax, if Sir George goes to the masquerade to-night, and what dress he wears.

Sav. Enough! now, Dick; if you'll call at my lodgings in your way back, and acquaint me with your cousin's intelligence, I'll double the trifle I have given you.

Dick. Bless your honour; I'll call, never fear me. [*Exit.*]

Sav. Surely the occasion may justify the means; 'tis doubly my duty to be lady Frances's protector; Courtall, I see, is planning an artful scheme; but Saville shall out plot him. [*Exit.*]

S C E N E *Sir George Touchwood's.**Enter Sir George and Villers.*

Vil. For shame, Sir George! you have left lady Frances almost in tears; how can you afflict her?

Sir Geo. 'Tis I that am afflicted; my dream of happiness is over; lady Frances and I are disunited.

Vil. The devil! why you have been in town but ten days; she can have made no acquaintance for a Commons affair yet.

Sir Geo. Pho! 'tis our minds that are disunited; she no longer places her whole delight in me; she has yielded herself up to the world.

Vil. Yielded herself up to the world; why didn't you bring her to town in a cage! then she might have taken a peep at the world? but what, after all, has the world done? A twelvemonth since you was the gayest fellow in it; if any body ask'd who dresses best? Sir George Touchwood! who is the most gallant man? Sir George Touchwood! who the most wedded to amusement and dissipation? Sir George Touchwood! and now Sir George is metamorphos'd into a sour censor, and talks of fashionable life with as much bitterness, as the old crabbed fellow in Rome there.

Sir Geo. The moment I became possess'd of such a jewel as lady Frances, every thing were a different complexion; that society in which I liv'd with so much eclat, became the object of my terror; and I think of the manners of polite life, as I do of the atmosphere of a pest-house. My wife is already infected; she was set upon this morning by maids, widows, and batchelors, who carried her off in triumph, in spite of my displeasure.

Vil. Aye, to be sure; there wou'd have been no triumph in the case, if you had not oppos'd it; but I have heard the whole story from Mrs. Racket,
and

and I assure you, lady Frances did not enjoy the morning at all; she wish'd for you fifty times.

Sir Geo. Indeed! are you sure of that?

Vil. Perfectly sure.

Sir Geo. I wish I had known it; my uneasiness at dinner was occasion'd by very different ideas.

Vil. Here then she comes, to receive your apology; but if she is true woman, her displeasure will rise in proportion to your contrition; and, 'till you grow careless about her pardon, she won't grant it; however, I'll leave you; matrimonial duets are seldom set in the stile I like. [Exit.

Enter Lady Frances.

Sir Geo. The sweet sorrow that glitters in those eyes, I cannot bear; (*embraces her*) look chearfully my love.

Lady Fran. I cannot look otherwise, if you are pleas'd with me.

Sir Geo. Well, Fanny, to-day you made your entré in the fashionable world; tell me honestly the impressions you receiv'd.

Lady Fran. Indeed, Sir George, I was so hurried from place to place, that I had not time to find out what my impressions were.

Sir Geo. That's the very spirit of the life you have chosen.

Lady Fran. Every body about me seem'd happy; but every body seem'd in a hurry to be happy somewhere else.

Sir Geo. And you like this?

Lady Fran. One must like, what the rest of the world likes.

Sir Geo. Pernicious maxim!

Lady Fran. But my dear Sir George, you have not promis'd to go with me to the masquerade?

Sir Geo. 'Twou'd be a shocking indecorum to be seen together, you know.

Lady

Lady Fran. Oh! no; I ask'd Mrs. Racket, and she told me we might be seen at the masquerade together, without being laugh'd at.

Sir Geo. Really!—

Lady Fran. Indeed, to tell you the truth, I cou'd with it was the fashion for married people to be inseparable; for I have more heart-felt satisfaction fifteen minutes with you at my side, than fifteen days of amusemēt cou'd give me without you.

Sir Geo. My sweet creature! how that confession charms me; let us begin the fashion. (*embracing.*)

Lady Fran. Oh, impossible! we shou'd not gain a single proselite; and you can't conceive what spightful things wou'd be said of us. At Kensington, to-day, a lady met us, whom we saw at court, when we were presented; she lifted up her hands in amazement; bless me! said she, to her companions, here's lady Frances, without Sir Hurlo Thrumbo! my dear Mrs. Racket, think what an important charge you have; for Heaven's sake, take her home again, or some enchanter, or a flying dragon, will descend and carry her off. Oh! said another, I dare swear, lady Frances has a clue to her heel, like the peerless Rosamond; her tender swain wou'd never have trust'd her so far without such a precaution.

Sir Geo. Heaven and earth! how shall innocence preserve its lustre, amidst manners so corrupt? My dear Fanny, I feel a sentiment for thee at this moment, tenderer than love; more animated than passion. I cou'd weep over that purity, expos'd to the sully'ing breath of fashion and the ton; in whose latitudināry vortex, Chastity herself can scarce move unspotted?

Enter Gibson.

Sir Geo. How, now?

Gibson. Your honour talk'd, I thought, something about going to the masquerade!

Sir

Sir Geo. Well?

Gibson. Is'nt—has'nt your honour—I thought, perhaps your honour had forgot to order a dress.

Lady Fran. Well considered, Gibson; come, will you be Jew, Turk, or Heretick; a Chinese emperor, or a ballad-singer, a rake, or a watchman?

Sir Geo. Oh, neither my love! I can't take the trouble to support a character.

Lady Fran. You'll wear a domino then; I saw a pink domino trimm'd with blue, at the shop where I bought my habit; wou'd you like it?

Sir Geo. Any thing! any thing!

Lady Fran. Then go about it directly, Gibson; a pink domino trimm'd with blue, and a hat of the same; come, you have not seen my dress yet; it is most beautiful, I long to have it on. [Exeunt.

Gibson. A pink domino trimm'd with blue, and a hat of the same; what the devil can it signify to Sally now, what his dress is to be? Sure the slut has not made an assignation to meet her master.

[Exit.

End of the Third Act.

ACT IV. SCENE I.

Masquerade, Pantheon.

Mount. **W**HO'LL buy my nostrums? Who'll buy my nostrums?

1st Mask. What are they? (*all masks come round.*)

Mount. Different sorts, and for different customers; here's a liquor for ladies, it expels the rage of gaming and gallantry; here's a pill for members of parliament, good to settle consciences; here's an eye-water for jealous husbands, it thickens the visual

fual membrane, thro' which they see too clearly ; here's a decoction for the clergy, it never fits easy, if the patient has more than one living ; here's a draught for lawyers, a great promoter of modesty ; here's a powder for poets, 'twill rectify the fumes of an empty stomach, and make them dream of beef and pudding.

1st Mask. Have you a nostrum that can give patience to young heirs, whose uncles and fathers are stout and hearty ?

Mount. Yes ; and I have an infusion for creditors ; it gives resignation and humility, when fine gentlemen break thro' promises, or plead their privilege.

1st Mask. Come along ; I'll find customers for your whole cargo. (*all retire.*)

Enter Folly.

2d Mask. Hey, Tom Fool ; what business have you here ?

Folly. What, Sir ! affront a prince in his own dominions !

Enter Doricourt, meeting a mask.

Dor. Ha, my lord ! vous vice ; I thought you had been engag'd at Westminster, on this important night.

Mask. So I am ; I slip out, as soon as lord Trope got upon his legs ; I can badanage here an hour or two, and be back before he is down ; there's a fine figure, I'll address her.

Enter Lettitia.

Mask. Charity, fair lady ! charity for a poor pilgrim !

Let. Charity ! if you mean my prayers, heaven grant the lost pilgrim——

Mask. That blessing wou'd do from a devotee ; from you I ask other charities ; such charities as
beauty

beauty should bestow, soft looks, sweet words, and kind wishes.

Let. Alas! I am bankrupt of these, and forc'd to turn beggar myself; there he is; how shall I catch his attention?

Mask. Will you grant me no favour?

Let. Yes, one; I'll make you my partner, not for life, but thro' the soft mazes of a minuet; dare you dance?

Dor. Some spirit in that.

Mask. That, lady, is against my vow; but here is a man of the world.—

(*Letitia takes out one of the masks, and dances a minuet.*)

Dor. Do you know her, my lord?

Mask. No! such a woman as that, would formerly be known in any disguise, but beauty is now common; Venus seems to have given her cestos to the whole sex.

Dor. (*during the minuet*) She dances divinely! (*when it ends*) somebody must know her! let us enquire who she is. [Exit.

Enter Hardy, in the dress of Isaac Mendoza.

Hardy. Why is'nt it a shame, to see so many stout, well-built, young fellows masquerading, and cutting capers here at home, instead of making the French cut capers to the tune of cannon; or sweating the Spaniards with an English fandango? I foresee the end of all this. (*comes down.*)

1st Mask. Why, thou little testy Israelite; back to Duke's place, and preach your tribe into a subscription for the good of the land, on whose milk and honey you fatten; where are your Joshua's, and your Gideon's? aye, what! all dwindled into stock-brokers, pedlars and ragmen?

Hardy. No! not at all; some of us turn Christians, and by degrees, grow into all the priviledges of Englishmen; in the second generation, we are patriots, rebels, courtiers and husbands. (*putting his hand to his forehead.*)

*The Belle's Stratagem.**Two other masks advance.*

2d Mask. What, my little Isaac, how the devil came you here? where's your old Margaret?

Hardy. Oh! I have got rid of her.

Mask. How?

Hardy. Why, I persuaded a young Irishman she was a blooming plump beauty of eighteen; so they made an elopement, and she is now the toast of Tipperary! Ha, there's cousin Racket, and her party; they shan't know me.

Rack. Look at this dumplin Jew, he must be a Levite by his figure; you have surely practis'd the flesh-fork along while friend, to have rais'd that goodly presence?

Hardy. About as long, my brisk widow, as you have been angling for a second husband; but my hook has been better baited than yours; you have only caught gudgeons, I see.

Flut. This is one of the genuises they have to entertain the company with their accidental fallies; let me look at your commen-place-book; I want a few good things.

Hardy. I'd oblige you, with all my heart, but you'll spoil them in repeating; for nobody will believe they are your own.

Sir Geo. He knows you, Flutter; the little gentleman fancies himself a wit, I see.

Hardy. There's no depending upon what you see; the eyes of the jealous are not to be trusted; look to your lady.

Flut. He knows you, Sir George.

Sir Geo. What, am I the town talk? (*aside.*)

Hardy. I can neither see Doricourt nor Letty; I must find them out. (*Hardy goes up.*)

Rack. Well, lady Frances, is not all this charming? cou'd you have conceiv'd such a brilliant assembly of objects?

Lady Fran. Delightful! the days of enchantment are restor'd! the columns glow with sapphires
and

and rubies ! Emperors, fairies, beauties, and dwarfs, meet at every step !

Sir Geo. How lively are first impressions on sensible minds ; in four hours vapidty and languor, will take place of that exquisite sense of joy, which flutters your little heart.

Rack. What an inhuman creature ! Fate has not allow'd us the sensations, above ten times in our lives ; and wou'd you have us shorten them by anticipation ?

Flut. Oh Lord ! your wisemen are the greatest fools upon earth ; they reason about their enjoyment, and analyze their pleasures, whilst the essence escapes ; look, lady Frances, d'ye see that figure, strutting in the dress of an emperor ? his father retails oranges in Botolph-lane, and his mother was the daughter of a tripe-seller ; that gypsiey is a maid of honour, and that rag-man is a physician.

Lady Fran. Why you know every body.

Flut. Oh, every creature ! a mask is nothing at all to me ; I can give you the history of half the people here ; in the next apartment there's a whole family, who, to my knowlege, have liv'd on cow-heels and water-creeses this month, to make a figure here to-night ; but to make up for that, they'll cram their pockets with cold ducks and chickens, for a carnival to-morrow.

Lady Fran. Oh ! I should like to see this provident family.

Flut. Honour me with your arm.

[*Exit Flutter and Lady Frances.*]

Sir Geo. I was going to follow her, and now I dare not : how can I be such a fool, to be govern'd by the fear of that ridicule which I despise ?

[*Exit Sir George.*]

Enter Saville, with a mask, habited like lady Frances.

Sav. I have seen Courtall in Sir George's habit, tho' he endeavours to keep himself conceal'd : go and seat yourself in the tea-room, and on no ac-

count discover your face. Remember (*to Kitty*) that the woman you personate is a woman of virtue.

Kitty. I am afraid I shall find that a difficult character; indeed I believe 'tis seldom kept up thro' a whole masquerade.

Sav. Of that you can be no judge; follow my directions, and you shall be rewarded. [*Exit Kitty.*]

Enter Doricourt.

Dor. Ha, Saville! did you see a lady dance just now?

Sav. No.

Dor. Very odd no body knows her.

Sav. Where is Miss Hardy?

Dor. Cutting watch-papers, and making connundrums.

Sav. What do you mean?

Dor. Faith, I hardly know; she's not here however, Mrs. Racket tells me—I ask'd no further.

Sav. Your indifference seems encreas'd.

Dor. Quite the reverse, thirty-two degrees towards hatred.

Sav. You are jesting.

Dor. Then it must be with a very ill grace, my dear Saville, for I never felt so seriously; do you know the creature is almost an idiot?

Sav. Who?

Dor. An idiot! what the devil shall I do with her? I'll feign myself mad, and then Hardy will propose to cancel the engagements.

Sav. An excellent expedient; I must leave you; you are mysterious, and I can't stay to unravel you; I came here to watch over innocence and beauty.

Dor. The guardian of innocence and beauty at three and twenty! is there not a cloven foot under that black gown, Saville?

Sav. No faith; Courtall is here on a most detestable design. I found means to get a knowledge of the lady's dress, and have brought a girl to personate

sonate her, whose reputation cannot be hurt; you shall know the result to-morrow. Adieu!

[*Exit Saville.*]

Dor. (*musing*) Yes; I think that will do; I'll feign myself mad; see the doctor to pronounce me incurable; and when the parchments are destroyed—

Enter Lettitia, and sings.

S O N G.

*Wake thou son of dulness wake,
From thy drowsy senses shake
All the spells that care employs,
Cheating mortals of their joys.*

*Light wing'd spirits hither haste,
Who prepar'd for mortal taste
All the gifts that pleasure sends,
Ev'ry bliss that youth attends.*

*Touch his feelings, rouse his soul;
Whilst the sparkling moments roll;
Bid him wake to new delight,
Crown'd the magic of the night.*

Dor. The same sweet creature! (*aside.*)

Let. You have chosen an odd situation for study; fashion and taste preside on this spot; they throw their spells around you; ten thousand delights spring up at their command; and you a stoick, a being without senses, are wrapt in reflections!

Dor. And you, the most charming being in the world, awake me to admiration! did you come from the stars?

Let. Yes; and I shall reascend in a moment.

Dor. Pray shew me your face before you go.

Let. Beware of imprudent curiosity; it lost Paradise.

Dor. Eve's curiosity was rais'd by the devil; an angel tempts mine; so your allusion is not in point.

Let. But why would you see me face?

Dor. To fall in love with it.

Let. And what then?

Dor. Why then; ay, curse it; there's the rub.

Let. Your mistress will be angry; but perhaps
you have no mistress? (aside.)

Dor. Yes; and a sweet one she is.

Let. What, is she old?

Dor. No!

Let. Ugly?

Dor. No!

Let. What then?

Dor. Pho! don't talk about her; but shew me your face.

Let. My vanity forbids it; 'twould frighten you!

Dor. Impossible! your shape is graceful; your air bewitching; your bosom transparent; and your chin would tempt me to kiss it, if I did not see a pouting red lip above it that demands——

Let. You grow too free.

Dor. Shew me your face then, only half a glance.

Let. Not for worlds!

Dor. What, you will have a little gentle force.
(attempts to seize her mask.)

Let. I am gone for ever. [Exit.]

Enter Flutter, Lady Frances in the middle, and Saville.

Lady Fran. How can you be thus interested for a stranger?

Sav. Goodness will ever interest; its home is heaven, on earth 'tis but a wanderer. Imprudent lady, why have you left the side of your natural protector? Where's your husband?

Lady Fran. Surely it can't be merely his habit! there's something in him that awes me!

Flutter. Pho; 'tis only his grey beard; I know him, he kept a lottery-office in Corn-hill.

Sav.

Sav. My province, as an enchanter, lays open every secret to me, lady: there are dangers abroad, beware! [Exit.]

Lady Fran. 'Tis very odd; his manners has made me tremble: let us seek Sir George.

Flut. Here he is coming towards us. (*Courtall comes forward habited like Sir George.*)

Court. There she is; if I can disengage her from that fool, Flutter; crown me ye schemes with immortal wreaths!

Lady Fran. O my dear Sir George! I am rejoic'd to see you! an old conjuror has been frightening me with his prophecies; where's Mrs. Racket? Why do you keep on your mask, 'tis too warm?

Court. 'Tis too warm, I want air; let us go.

Lady Fran. You seem quite agitated; shan't we bid our company adieu?

Court. No, no! there's no time for forms; I'll just give directions to the carriage, and be with you in a moment; (*going and stepping back*) put on your mask, I have a particular reason for it. [Exit.]

Saville advances with Kitty.

Sav. Now Kitty, you know your lesson; lady Frances, (*takes of his mask*) let me lead you to your husband.

Lady Fran. Heavens! is Mr. Saville the conjuror! Sir George is just step'd to the door to give directions, we are going home immediately!

Sav. No, madam! you are deceiv'd; Sir George is this way.

Lady Fran. This is astonishing!

Sav. Be not alarm'd; you have escap'd a snare, and shall be in safety in a moment.

[Exit Saville and lady Frances.]

Enter Courtall and seizes the hand of Kitty.

Court. Now!

Kitty. 'Tis pity to leave the rooms so soon.

Court.

Court. Perhaps I may bring you back, my angel; go now you must. [Exit.]

Doricourt and Letitia come forward.

Dor. By heaven I never was charm'd till now; English beauty, French vivacity, wit, elegance! your name, my angel! tell me your name, tho' you persist in concealing your face!

Let. My name has a spell in it.

Dor. I thought so; it must be charming.

Let. But if I reveal'd, the charm is broken.

Dor. I'll answer for its force.

Let. Suppose it Harriot, or Charlotte, or Maria!

Dor. Hang Harriot, Charlotte, or Maria, the name your father gave you.

Let. That can't be worth hearing, 'tis so transient a thing.

Dor. How, transient!

Let. Heaven forbid it shou'd be lasting 'till I am married.

Dor. Married! the chains of matrimoney are too heavy and vulgar for such a spirit as yours; the flow'ry wreaths of Cupid are the only bands you should wear.

Let. They are the lightest I believe; but 'tis possible to wear those of marriage gracefully; throw them loosely round, and twist them in a true lover's knot for the bosom!

Dor. Delightful! but what will you be when a wife?

Let. A woman! if my husband should be a churl, a fool, or a tyrant, I'd break his heart, ruin his fortune, clope with the first pretty fellow that ask'd me, and return the contempt of the world with scorn, whilst my feelings prey'd upon my life.

Dor. Amazing; (*aside*) what if you lov'd him, and he were worthy of your love?

Let. Why then, I'd be any thing and all; grave, gay, capricious; the soul of whim, the spirit of variety; live with him in the eye of fashion, or in the shade of retirement; change my country, my sex;

sex; feast with him in an Esquimaux hut, or a Persian pavilion; join him in the victorious war dance on the borders of lake Ontario, or sleep to the soft breathings of a flute, in the cinnamon grove of Ceylon; dig with him in the mines of Golconda, or enter the dangerous precincts of the Mogul's seraglio; cheat him of wishes, and overturn the empire to restore the husband of my heart to the blessings of liberty and love!

Dor. Delightful wildness! oh! to catch thee, and hold thee for ever in this little cage. (*attempting to clasp her.*)

Let. Hold, Sir! tho' Cupid must give the bait that tempts me to the snare, 'tis Hymen must spread the net to catch me.

Dor. 'Tis in vain to assume airs of coldness; fate has ordain'd you mine.

Let. How do you know?

Dor. I feel it here; I never met with a woman so perfectly to my taste; and I don't believe it form'd you on purpose to tantalize.

Let. This moment is worth my whole existence. (*aside.*)

Dor. Come shew me your face, and rivet my chains.

Let. To-morrow you shall be satisfi'd.

Dor. To-morrow! and why not to-night?

Let. No!

Dor. Where then shall I wait on you to-morrow? Where see you?

Let. You shall see me in an hour when you least expect me.

Dor. Why all this mystery?

Let. I like to be mysterious; at present be content to know that I am a woman of family and fortune. Adieu!

Enter

Enter Hardy.

Hardy. Adieu! then I come at the fag end?

Dor. Let me see you to your carriage.

Let. As you value knowing me, stir not a step; if I am follow'd you never see me more. [*Exit.*]

Dor. Barbarous creature! she's gone. What, and is this really serious? Am I in love? Pho, it can't be! O, Flutter, do you know that charming creature?

Enter Flutter.

Flut. What charming creature; I pass'd a thousand?

Dor. She went out at that door as you enter'd.

Flut. O yes; I know her very well.

Dor. Do you, my dear fellow; who?

Flut. She's kept by lord George Jennet.

Hardy. Impudent scoundrel. (*aside.*)

Dor. Kept!

Flut. Yes; colonel Gorget had her first; then Mr. Saville; then I forget exactly how many; and at last, she's lord George's. (*talks to masks.*)

Dor. I'll murder Gorget, poison lord George, and stab myself!

Hardy. Now's the time, I see, to clear up the whole. Mr. Doricourt, I say, Flutter was mistaken; I know who you are in love with—

Dor. A strange rencounter; who?

Hardy. My Letty!

Dor. Oh! I understand your rebuke; 'tis too soon, Sir, to assume the father-in-law.

Hardy. Zounds! what do you mean by that; I tell you, that the lady you admire, is Lettitia Hardy!

Dor. I am glad you are so well satisfi'd with the state of my heart; I wish I was. [*Exit.*]

Hardy.

Hardy. Stop a moment; stop I say; what! you won't! very well; if I don't play you a trick for this, may I never be a grand-father! I'll plot with Letty now, and not against her; aye, hang me if I don't; there's something in my head, that shall tinge in his heart: he shall have a lesson upon impatience, that, I foresee, he'll be the better of as long as he lives. *[Exit.*

Saville comes forward with other masks.

Sav. Flutter, come with us; we're going to raise a laugh at Courtall's.

Flut. With all my heart; live to live, was my father's motto; live to laugh, is mine. *[Exit.*

S C E N E *Courtall's.*

Enter Courtall, and Kitty Willis.

Kitty. Where have you brought me, Sir George? This is not our home.

Court. 'Tis my home, beautiful lady Frances; *(kneeling, taking off his mask)* oh! forgive the ardency of the passion that has compell'd me to deceive you!

Kitty. Mr. Courtall, what will become of me?

Court. Oh! say but that you pardon the wretch who adores you. Did you but know the agonizing tortures of my heart, since I had the felicity of conversing with you this morning, or the disappear that now—— *[knocking at the door.*

Kitty. Oh! I'm undone!

Court. Zounds! my dear lady Frances! I am not at home, rascal; do you hear, let nobody in, I'm not at home.

Ser. (without). Sir, I told the gentlemen so.

Court. Eternal curses; they are coming up; step into this room adorable creature, one moment; I'll throw them out of the window if they stay three— *[Exit Kitty.*

Enter

Enter Saville, Flutter, and masks.

Flut. O Gemini! I beg the petticoat's pardon; I just saw a corner of it.

Mask. No wonder admittance was so difficult; I thought you took us for bailiffs.

Court. Upon my soul, I am devilish glad to see you; but you perceive how I am circumstanc'd; excuse me at this moment.

Mask. Tell us who it is then?

Court. O fie!

Flut. We won't blab.

Court. I can't upon my honour; thus far she's a woman of the first character and rank. Saville, have I influence, or have I not?

Sav. Why sure you don't insinuate?

Court. No! not insinuate; but swear that she's now in my bed-chamber; by gad, I don't deceive you. There's generalship, you rogue; such an humble, distant, fighting fellow as thou art, at the end of six months siege, would have boasted of a kiss from her glove. I only give the signal, and pop, she's in my arms.

Sav. What! lady Frances?

Court. Hush! you shall see her name to-morrow morning in red letters at the end of my list. Gentlemen, you must excuse me now; come and drink chocolate at twelve; but—

Sav. Ay, let us go out of respect to the lady; a person of rank.

Flut. Is it? then I'll have a peep at her. (*runs to the scene.*)

Court. This is too much, Sir.

Mask. By Jupiter, we'll have a peep.

Court. Gentlemen, consider, for heaven's sake, a lady of quality, what the consequence—

Flut. Why, the consequence will be, you'll have your throat cut; but I'll write your elegy; so now for the door. I beg your ladyship's pardon, whoever you are, (*leading her out*) emerge from darkness
like

like the glorious sun, and blebs the wondering circle with your charms. (*takes off her mask*)

Sav. Kitty Willis! ha, ha, ha!

Omnes. Kitty Willis!

Mask. Why, what a fellow you are to attempt imposing on your friends in this manner! a lady of quality, and an earl's daughter! Your ladyship's most obedient servant. Ha, ha, ha!

Sav. Courtall, have you influence or have you not?

Flut. The man's moon-struck!

Court. Hell, and ten thousand uries seize you all together.

Kitty. What, me, Mr. Courtall! me, whom who have knelt to, and pray'd to, and ador'd!

Court. Disappoint'd and laugh'd at!

Sav. Laugh'd at! dispis'd; I have falfill'd my design, which was to expose your villiany, and laugh at your presumption. Adieu, Sir; remember how you again boast of your influence with women of rank; and when you next want amusement, dare not look up to the virtuous or the noble for a companion. [*Exit Saville and Kitty, Flutter going out last and Courtall.*]

Flut. And before you carry a lady into your bed-chamber again, look under her mask.

[*Exit.*

Court. There's no bearing this; I'll set off for Paris directly.

[*Exit.*

End of the Fourth Act.

ACT V. SCENE I.

*An Apartment at Hardy's.**Enter Hardy and Villers.*

Vil. **W**HIMSICAL enough; dying for her, and hates—believes her a fool, and a woman of brilliant understanding.

Hardy. As true as your alive; but, when I went up to him last night at the Pantheon, out of downright good-nature, and to explain things, my gentleman whips round upon his heel, and snapt me as short as if I had been a beggar-woman with six children, and he the overseer of the parish.

Vil. Here comes the wonder-worker (*enter Letitia*) here comes the enchantress, who can go to masquerades, and sing and dance, and talk a man out of his wits; but pray have we morning masquerades?

Let. Oh no! but I am so enamour'd of this all-conquering habit, that I could not resist putting it on the moment I had breakfasted; I shall wear it on the day I am married, and then lay it by in spices, like the miraculous robes of St. Bridget.

Vil. Ay, that's as most brides do; the charms that help'd to catch are generally laid by, one after another, 'till she grows a downright wife, and then runs crying to her mother, because she has transform'd her lover into a downright husband.

Hardy. Listen to me; I have not slept a wink to-night, for thinking of plots to plague Doricourt; and they drove one another out of my head so quick, that I was as giddy as a goose; I could make nothing of 'em. I wish to goodness, you would contrive something.

Vil. Contrive to plague him! nothing so easy; don't undeceive him, madam, 'till he's your husband;

band ; marry him whilst he possesses the sentiments you labour'd to give him of Miss Hardy ; and when you are his wife——

Let. Oh heavens ! I see the whole ; that's the very thing, my dear Mr. Villers ; you are the divinest——

Vil. Don't make love to me, hussy.

Enter Mrs. Racket.

Mrs. Rack. No, pray don't, for I intend to have Villers myself in about six years ; there's an oddity about him that pleases me ; he holds women in contempt, and I should like to have an opportunity of breaking his heart for that.

Vil. And when I am heartily tir'd of life, I know no woman whom I could with more pleasure make my executioner.

Hardy. It cannot be ; I foresee it will be impossible to bring it about ; you know the wedding was not to take place this week or more, and Letty will never be able to play the fool so long.

Vil. The knot shall be tied to-night ; I have it all here ; the licence is ready. Feign yourself ill ; send for Doricourt, and tell him you can't go out of the world in peace, unless you see the ceremony perform'd.

Hardy. I feign myself ill ! I could as soon feign myself a Roman ambassador ; I was never ill in my life but with the tooth-ach ;—except when Letty's mother was breeding her, I had all the qualms.

Vil. Oh ! I have no fears for you ; but what says Miss Hardy ? are you willing to make the irrevocable vow before night ?

Let. O heavens ! I, I, I ! 'tis so exceedingly sudden, that really——

Mrs. Rack. That really, Sir, she's frighten'd out of her wits, least it should be impossible to bring it about ; but I have taken upon myself the management of the affair, and you shall be Mrs. Doricourt

this very night; come (*to Hardy*) to bed directly; your room shall be cram'd with phials and all the apparatus of death; then heigho-presto, for Doricourt.

Vil. You go and put off your conquering dress (*to Letty*) and get all your awkward airs ready; and you practise a few groans (*to Hardy*); and you, if possible, an air of gravity (*to Mrs. Racket*); I'll answer for the plot.

Let. Married in jest; 'tis an odd idea; well, I'll venture it. [*Exit with Mrs. Racket.*]

Vil. Ay, I'll be sworn (*looks at his watch*) 'tis past three; the budget is to be open'd this morning. I'll just step down to the house; will you go?

Hardy. What, with a mortal sickness.

Vil. What a blockhead! I believe if half of us were to stay away with mortal sickness, 'twould be for the good of the nation. Good morning; I'll call and feel your pulse as I come back. [*Exit.*]

Hardy. You won't find 'em over brisk, I fancy; I foresee some ill happening from this making believe to die before one's time; but hang it, I'm a stout man yet, only fifty-six. In the last yearly bill, there were three liv'd to above a hundred: fifty-six, from a hundred, and there remains forty-four; I foresee I have forty-four years to live yet,—fiddle-de-dee. I am not afraid, not I.

S C E N E *Doricourt's House.*

Enter Doricourt in his robe de Chambre, and Saville,

Sav. Undress'd so late!

Dor. I did not go to bed till late; 'twas late when I got to sleep; late when I rose. Do you know lord George Jennet?

Sav. Yes.

Dor. Has he a mistress?

Sav. Yes.

Dor. What sort of a creature is she?

Sav. Why, she spends him three thousand a year with the ease of a duchess, and entertains his friends

friends with the grace of Ninon. (*Doricourt walks about disordered*) In the name of caprice, what ails you?

Dor. You have hit it, elle est mon caprice; the mistress of lord George Jennet, is my caprice. Oh, insufferable!

Sav. What! you saw her at the masquerade?

Dor. Saw her! lov'd her! died for her without knowing her, and now the curse is, I can't hate her.

Sav. Ridiculous enough; all this distress about a kept woman, whom any man may have, I dare swear, in a fortnight. They have been jarring some time.

Dor. Have her! the sentiments I have conceiv'd for the witch, in that time are unaccountable,—I cannot—The idea, was she a woman of honour, for a wife, I could adore her; but I really believe, if she should send me an assignation I should beat her.

Sav. Hey day, this sounds like love; what becomes of poor Miss Hardy?

Dor. Her name has given me an ague; dear Saville, how shall I contrive to make old Hardy cancel the engagements? The moiety of the estate, which I will forfeit, shall be his next moment by deed of gift.

Sav. Let me see; can't you get it insinuated, that you are a devilish wild fellow; that you are an Infidel, and attach'd to wenching, gaming, and so forth.

Dor. Aye, such a character might have done some good two centuries back; but who the devil can it frighten now? I believe it must be the mad scene at last; there—(*throws himself into a mad position*)—will that do for the grin?

Sav. Ridiculous! but how are you certain that the woman that has so bewilder'd you, belongs to lord George?

Dor. Flutter told me so.

Sav. Then, fifty to one against the intelligence.

Dor. It must be so; there was a mystery in her manner, for which nothing else can account; (*rapping at the door*) who can this be?

Sav. The proverb is your answer; 'tis Flutter himself. Tip him a scene of the madman, and see how it takes.

Dor. I will; a good way to send it about town; shall it be of the melancholy kind, or the raving.

Sav. Rant! rant! here he comes.

Dor. Talk not to me, who can pull comets by the beard, and overset an island!

Enter Flutter, gets into the middle.

There, this is he—this is he, who hath my poor soul without coat or breeches, to be toss'd about in either, like a duck feather: villain, give me my soul again! (*shakes Flutter.*)

Flut. Upon my soul, I have not your soul.

Sav. Oh, Mr. Flutter! what a melancholy sight! I little thought ever to see my poor friend reduc'd to this.

Flut. Mercy defend me! what, is he mad?

Sav. You see how it is; a cursed Italian lady, thro' jealousy, gave him a drug, and every full of the moon—

Dor. Moon! who dares talk of the moon? the patroness of genius! the rectifier of wit! the—Oh! here she is—I feel her—she tugs at my brain—she has it—she has it—oh! [*Exit.*]

Flut. Yes, and you have it too; well, this is dreadful, exceedingly dreadful, I protest; have you had Munro?

Sav. Not yet; the worthy Miss Hardy; what, a match?

Flut. Aye, aye, very true; do they know it?

Sav. Oh, no! the paroxysm seiz'd him but this morning.

Dor. (*behind*) Pibery, bow, bow.

Flut. Adieu! I can't stay.

Sav.

Sav. But you must stay and assist me ; (*holding him*) perhaps he'll return again in a moment, and when he is in this way, his strength his prodigious.

Flut. Can't stay, indeed ; can't, upon my soul. (*going.*)

Sav. Don't make a mistake ; remember 'tis Doricourt that's mad. [*Exit.*]

Flut. I'll say your both mad, and then I can't mistake. [*Exit.*]

S C E N E, *Sir George Touchwood's.*

Enter Sir George and lady Frances.

Sir Geo. The bird is escap'd ; Courtall is gone to France.

Lady Fran. Heaven and earth ! have you been to seek him ?

Sir Geo. Seek him ; aye.

Lady Fran. How did you get his name ? I should never have told it you.

Sir Geo. I learn'd it at the first coffee-house I enter'd ; every body is full of the story.

Lady Fran. Thank heaven he's gone ; but now I have a story for you : the Hardy family are forming a plot upon your friend Doricourt, and we are expected in the evening to assist.

Sir Geo. With all my heart, my angel, but I can't stay to hear it unfolded ; they told me Mr. Saville would be at home in half an hour, and I'm impatient to see him ;—the adventure of last night !

Lady Fran. Think of it only with gratitude ; the danger I was in has overset a new system of conduct that perhaps I was too much inclin'd to adopt ; but henceforward, my dear Sir George, you shall be my constant companion and protector ; and when they ridicule the unfashionable monsters, the felicity of our hearts shall make their satire pointless.

Sir Geo. Charming angel ! you almost reconcile me to Courtall ; hark ! here's company ; 'tis your lively

lively widow. I'll step down the back stairs to escape her. [Exit.]

Enter Mrs. Racket.

Mrs. Rack. Oh, lady Frances, I'm shock'd to death; have you receiv'd a card from us?

Lady Fran. Yes, within these twenty minutes.

Mrs. Rack. Ay, 'tis of no consequence; 'tis all over; Doricourt is mad; my poor Lettitia, as we were enjoying ourselves with the prospect of a scheme that was plann'd for their happiness, in came Flutter, breathless, with the intelligence; I flew here to know, if you had heard it?

Lady Fran. No indeed; and I hope it is one of Mr. Flutter's dreams. (*enter Saville*) Apropos; we now shall be inform'd. Mr. Saville, I rejoice to see you, tho' Sir George will be disappointed; he's gone to your lodgings.

Sav. I should have been happy to have prevented Sir George; I hope your ladyship's adventure last night did not disturb your dreams.

Lady Fran. Not at all, for I never slept a moment; my escape, and the importance of my obligation to you, employ'd my thoughts; but we have just had shocking intelligence; is it true, that Mr. Doricourt is mad?

Sav. So the business is done. (*aside*) Mad m, I am sorry to say, that I have just now been a melancholy witness of his ravings; he was in the height of a paroxysm.

Mrs. Rack. Oh! there can be no doubt of it; Flutter told us the whole history. Some Italian princess gave him a box of sweetmeats, sent to him by her own page, that renders him lunatic every month; poor Miss Hardy! I never felt so much upon any occasion in my life.

Sav. To soften your concern, I will inform you, madam, that Miss Hardy is less to be pitied than you imagine.

Mrs. Rack. Why so, Sir?

Sav.

Sav. 'Tis rather a delicate subject; but he did not love Miss Hardy.

Mrs. Rack. He did love Miss Hardy, Sir, and would have been the happiest of men.

Sav. Pardon me, madam, his heart was not only free from that lady's chains, but absolutely captivated by another.

Mrs. Rack. No, Sir! no; it was Miss Hardy that captivated him; she met him last night at the masquerade, and charm'd him in disguise; he profess'd the most violent passion for her, and a plan was laid this evening, to cheat him into happiness.

Sav. Ha, ha, ha! Upon my soul, I beg your pardon, I have not eaten any of the Italian lady's box of sweetmeats, sent by her own page; and yet I am as mad as Doricourt, ha, ha, ha!

Mrs. Rack. So it appears; what can all this mean?

Sav. Why, madam, he is at present in his perfect senses; but he'll lose them in ten minutes, thro' joy; the madness is all a faint to avoid marrying Miss Hardy, ha, ha, ha! *omnes*, ha, ha, ha! I'll carry him the intelligence directly. (*going*).

Mrs. Rack. Not for the world; I owe him revenge now, for what he has made us suffer; you must promise not to divulge a syllable I have told you, and when Doricourt is summon'd to Mr. Hardy's, prevail on him to come, madness and all.

Lady Fran. Pray do; I should like to see him shewing off, now I'm in the secret.

Sav. You must be oblig'd; tho' 'tis inhuman to conceal his happiness.

Mrs. Rack. I am going home; so I'll set you down at his lodgings, and acquaint you by the way, with our whole scheme! adieu.

Sav. I attend you. (*leading her out.*)

Mrs. Rack. You won't fail us? (*to lady Frances.*)

[*Exit Saville and Mrs. Rack.*]

Lady Fran. No; depend on us.

[*Exit.*]

SCENE

S C E N E *Doricourt's house, Doricourt on a settee.*

Dor. Pho ! (*flings away the book*) what effect can the morals of fourscore have on a mind torn with passion ? (*mus'ing*) is it possible such a soul as her's can support itself, in so humiliating a situation ? a kept woman ! (*rising*) well, well, I am glad it is so.

Enter Saville.

Sav. What a happy dog you are, Doricourt ; I might have been mad or beggar'd, or pistol'd myself without its being mention'd ; but you, forsooth, the whole female world is concern'd for ; I reported the state of your brain to five different women ; the lip of the first trembled ; the white bosom of the second heav'd a sigh ; the third ejaculated, and turned her eye to the glass ; the fourth bless'd herself ; and the fifth said, whilst she pin'd a curl—well, now, perhaps, he'll be an amusing companion ; his native dulness was intolerable.

Dor. Envy ! sheer envy ! by the smiles of Hebe, there are not less than forty pair of the brightest eyes in town will drop chrytals, when they hear of my misfortune.

Sav. But I have news for you ; poor Hardy is confin'd to his bed ; they say he is going out of the world by the next post, and he wants to give you his blessing.

Dor. Ill ! so ill—I'm sorry from my soul ; he's a worthy little fellow, if he had not the gift of foreseeing so strongly.

Sav. Well ; but you must go and take leave.

Dor. What ! to act the lunatic in the dying man's chamber ?

Sav. Exactly the thing ; and will bring your business to a short issue ; for his last commands must be that you are not to marry his daughter.

Dor. That's true, by Jupiter ; and yet, hang it, 'tis imposing upon a poor fellow at so serious a moment ; I can't do it.

Sav.

Sav. You must faith; I'm answerable for your appearance, tho' it should be in a strait waistcoat; he knows your situation, and seems the more desirous of the interview.

Dor. I don't like encountering Racket; she's an arch little devil, and will discover the cheat.

Sav. There's a fellow now, cheated ninety-nine women, and is afraid of the hundredth.

Dor. And with reason, for that hundredth is a widow. [Exit.]

S C E N E Hardy's drawing-room.

Enter Mrs. Racket and Miss Ogle.

Miss Ogle. And so Miss Hardy's actually to be married to-night?

Mrs. Rack. If her fate does not deceive her; you are appriz'd of the scheme, and we hope it will succeed.

Miss Ogle. Duce take her; she's six years younger than I am; (*aside*) is Mr. Doricourt handsome?

Mrs. Rack. Handsome, generous, young, and rich; there's a husband for you! isn't he worth pulling caps for?

Miss Ogle. In my conscience, the widow speaks as tho' she'd give cap, ears, and all for him. (*aside*) I wonder you did not try to catch this wonderful man, Mrs. Racket?

Mrs. Rack. Really, Miss Ogle, I had not time; besides, when I marry, so many stout young fellows will hang themselves, that out of regard to society in these hard times, I shall postpone it for a few years;—this will cost her a new lace, I heard it crack. (*aside.*)

Enter Sir George and lady Frances.

Sir Geo. Well, here we are; but where's the knight of the woful countenance?

Mrs. Rack. Here soon, I hope; for a woful night it will be without him.

Sir Geo. Oh fie! do you condescend to pun?

Mrs. Rack. Why not; it requires genius to make a good pun; some men of bright parts can't reach it. I know a lawyer who writes them upon the back of his briefs, and says they are of great use in a dry cause.

Enter Flutter.

Flut. Here they come, here they come; their coach stop'd as mine drove off.

Lady Fran. Miss Hardy's fate is at a crisis; she plays a hazardous game, and I tremble for her.

Sav. (*without*) Come let me guide you this way; my poor friend, why are you so furious?

Dor. (*without*) The house of death! to the house of death!

Enter Doricourt and Saville.

Dor. Oh! this is the spot.

Lady Fran. How wild and fiery he looks!

Miss Ogle. Now, I think, he looks terrifi'd!

Mrs. Rack. I never saw a mad-man before; let me examine him; will he bite?

Sav. Pray keep out of his reach, ladies; you don't know your danger; he is like a wild cat if a sudden thought seizes him. (*Flutter gets round.*)

Sir Geo. You talk like a keeper of wild cats; how much do you demand for shewing this monster?

Dor. I don't like this, I must rouse their sensibility. (*aside*) There! there! she darts thro' the air in liquid flames! down again! now I have her! oh! she burns, she scorches! oh! she eats into my very heart.

Omnes. Ha, ha, ha!

Dor. I am laugh'd at.

Mrs. Rack. Laugh'd at, ay, to be sure; why I could play the mad-man better than you;—there! there she is! now I have her. Ha, ha, ha!

Dor.

Dor. I knew that devil would discover me ;
(*aside*) I'll leave the house ; I'm cover'd with confusion. (*going.*)

Sir Geo. Stay Sir ; you must not go ; 'twas poorly done, Mr. Doricourt, to affect madness rather than fulfil your engagements.

Dor. Affect madness ! Saville, what can I do ?

Sav. Since you are discover'd, confess the whole.

Miss Ogle. Aye, turn evidence, and save yourself.

Dor. Yes, since my designs have been so unaccountably discover'd, I will avow the whole ; I cannot love Miss Hardy, and I never will.

Sav. Hold, my dear Doricourt, be not too rash ; what will the world say to such ?

Dor. Damn the world ! what will the world give me for loss of happiness ? Must I sacrifice my peace to please the world ?

Sav. Yes, every thing, rather than be branded with dishonour.

Lady Fran. Tho' your arguments should fail, there is a pleader, whom you surely cannot withstand ; the dying Mr. Hardy supplicates you not to forsake his child.

Enter Villers.

Vil. Mr. Hardy requests you to grant him a moment's conversation, Mr. Doricourt, tho' you should persist to send him miserable to the grave ; let me conduct you to his chamber.

Dor. Oh ! aye, any where—to the Antipodes, to the moon ; carry me, do what you will with me.

[*Exit Villers and Doricourt.*]

Mrs. Rack. Mortification and disappointment, then, are specifics in a case of stubbornness ; I'll follow and let you know what passes. [*Exit.*]

Flut. Have the charity to take me with you, that I may make no blunder in telling the story. [*Exit.*]

Lady Fran. Sir George, you don't know Mr. Saville.

[*Exit Lady Frances and Miss Ogle.*]

Sir Geo. Ten thousand pardons; but I will not pardon myself for not observing you; I have been with the utmost impatience at your door, twice to-day.

Sav. I am concern'd you had so much trouble, Sir George.

Sir Geo. Trouble; not a word, Saville; I hardly know how to address you; I am distress'd beyond measure, and it is the highest proof of my opinion of your honour, and the delicacy of your mind, that I open my heart to you.

Sav. What has disturb'd you, Sir George?

Sir Geo. Your having preserv'd lady Frances in so imminent a danger; start not, Saville! to protect lady Frances was my right; you have wrested from me my dearest privilege.

Sav. I hardly know how to answer such a reproach; I cannot apologize for what I have done.

Sir Geo. I do not mean to reproach you; I hardly know what I mean. There's one method, by which you may restore peace to me; I cannot endure, that my wife should be so infinitely indebted to any man, who is less than my brother.

Sav. Pray explain yourself?

Sir Geo. I have a sister, Saville, who is amiable, and you are worthy of her; I shall give her a commission to steal your heart, out of revenge for what you have done.

Sav. I am infinitely honour'd, Sir George; but—

Sir Geo. I cannot listen to a sentence that begins with so unpromising a word; you must go with us into Hampshire, and if you see each other with the eyes I do, your felicity will be compleat. I know no one to whose heart I could so readily commit the care of my sister's happiness.

Sav. I will attend you to Hampshire, with pleasure; but not on the plan of retirement; society has claims on lady Frances that forbid it.

Sir Geo. Claims, Saville!

Sav. Yes, claims! lady Frances was born to be the ornament of courts; she is sufficiently alarm'd

not to wander beyond the reach of her protector ; and from the British court, Sir George, the most tenderly anxious husband, could not wish to carry his wife : bid her keep in her eye, the bright example who presides there ; the splendor of whose rank, yield to the superiour lustre of her virtue !

Enter Mrs. Racket running, follow'd by Flutter and lady Frances.

Mrs. Rack. Oh ! heaven, do you know ?

Flut. Let me tell the story ; as soon as Doricourt—

Mrs. Rack. I protest you shan't—said Mr. Hardy—

Flut. No, 'twas Doricourt spoke first—says he ; no, 'twas the parson—says he—

Mrs. Rack. Stop his mouth, Sir George ; he'll spoil the tale.

Sir Geo. Never had circumstances the result !

Mrs. Rack. No, no ! you shall have it in form—Mr. Hardy perform'd the sick man like an angel ; he sat up in his bed, and talk'd so pathetically, that the tears stood in Doricourt's eyes.

Flut. Aye, stood ; they did not drop, but stood ; I shall in future be very exact—the parson seiz'd the moment—you know they never miss an opportunity.

Mrs. Rack. Make haste, said Doricourt ; if I have time to reflect ; poor Hardy, will die unhappy.

Flut. They had got as far as the day of judgment, when we slipped out of the room.

Sir Geo. Then, by this time, they must have preach'd amazement ; which every body knows, is the end of matrimony.

Mrs. Rack. Aye, the reverend father ended the service with that word prophetically ; to teach the bride what a capricious monster a husband is.

Sir Geo. I rather think 'twas sarcastically done, to prepare the bridegroom for the unreasonable humours and vagaries of his helpmate.

Lady Fran. Here comes the bridegroom of to-night.

Enter Doricourt and Villers; Villers whispers Saville, who goes out.

Omnes. Joy, joy, joy!

Miss Ogle. If he's a sample of a bridegroom, keep me single; a younger son from the funeral of his father, could not carry a more fretful countenance.

Lady Fran. You do not consider the importance of the occasion.

Vil. No; nor how shocking a thing it is for a man to be forc'd to marry one woman, whilst his heart is devoted to another.

Mrs. Rack. Well, now 'tis over, I'll confess to you, Mr. Doricourt, I think 'twas a most ridiculous piece of Quixotism, to give up the happiness of a whole life to a man who, perhaps, has but a few moments to be sensible of the sacrifice.

Flut. So it appear'd to me; but, thought I, Mr. Doricourt, has travell'd; he knows best.

Dor. Zounds, confusion! did not you all set upon me? Did not you talk to me of honour, justice?

Sir Geo. Very true; you have acted according to their dictates; and I hope the utmost felicity of the married state will reward you!

Dor. Never, Sir George, to felicity I bid adieu; but I will endeavour to be content. Where is my wife? I must speak it; where is my wife?

Enter Letty, mask'd, led by Saville, all the rest fall back.

Sav. Mr. Doricourt, this lady was pressing to be introduc'd to you.

Dor. Oh! (*starting.*)

Let. I told you last night, you should see me at a time you least expected me; and I have kept my promise.

Vil. Whoever you are, madam, you could not have arriv'd in a happier moment! Mr. Doricourt is just married.

Let.

Let. Married! impossible! 'tis but a few hours since he swore to me eternal love. I believ'd him, gave him my virgin heart; and now—ungrateful sex!

Dor. Your virgin heart! no, lady; my fate, thank heaven, yet wants that torture. Nothing but the conviction that you were another's, could have made me think a moment of marriage, to have sav'd the lives of half mankind. But this visit, madam, is as barbarous as unexpected; it is now my duty to forget you; which, spite of your situation, I found difficult enough.

Let. My situation! what situation?

Dor. I must apologize for explaining it to this company; but, madam, I am not ignorant, that you are the companion of lord George Jennet; and that is the only circumstance that can give me peace.

Let. I a companion! ridiculous pretence! no, Sir; know, to your confusion, that my heart, my honour, and my name, is unspotted as her's you have married; my birth equal to your own; my fortune large; that, and my person, might have been yours; but, Sir, farewell! (*going.*)

Dor. Oh! stay a moment! rascal, (*to Flutter*) is not she a—

Flut. Who? she! O lord, no! 'twas quite a different person that I meant. I never saw that lady before.

Dor. Then never shall't thou see me more. (*shakes Flutter.*)

Mrs. Rack. Have mercy upon the poor man! heaven and earth! he'll murder him.

Dor. Murder him! yes, myself and all mankind! Sir George! Saville! Villers! 'twas you who push'd me upon this precipice; 'twas you who have snatch'd me from joy, felicity, and life!

Mrs. Rack. There now; how well he acts the mad-man; this is something like; I knew he would do it well enough, when the time came.

Dor.

Dor. Hard-hearted woman, enjoy my ruin; riot in my wretchedness. (*Hardy bursting in.*)

Hardy. This is too much; you are now the husband of my daughter, and how dare you shew all this passion about another woman?

Dor. Alive again!

Hardy. Alive! aye, and merry; here, wipe of the flour from my face; I was never in better health or spirits in my life; I foresaw 'twould do. Why my illness was all a fetch, man, to make you marry Letty.

Dor. 'Twas base and ungenerous! well, Sir, you shall be gratifi'd; the possession of my heart, was no object either with you or your daughter; my fortune, and my name, was all you desir'd, and these I leave ye. My native England I shall quit, nor ever behold you more. But, lady, that in my exile, I may have one consolation, grant me the favour you deny'd last night; let me behold all that mask conceals, that your whole image may be impress'd on my heart, and cheer my distant solitary hours.

Let. This is the most awful moment of my life; oh, Doricourt! the sight of taking of my mask, stamps me the most blest or miserable of women!

Dor. What can this mean? Reveal your face, I conjure you.

Let. Behold it. (*takes off her mask.*)

Dor. Rapturous transport! heaven!

Let. This little stratagem arose from my disappointment in not having made the impression on you I wish'd; the timidity of the English character, and that modesty we boast, threw a veil over me you could not penetrate; you have forc'd me to throw off the veil that hid me.

Dor. I am yet in a state of intoxication; I cannot answer you; speak on sweet angel.

Let. You see, I can be any thing; chuse my character, your taste shall fix it; shall I be an English wife, or breaking at once from the bonds
of

of nature, and education, step forth to the world in all the captivating glare of foreign manners?

Dor. You shall be nothing but yourself; nothing can be captivating that you are not. I will not wrong your penetration, by pretending that you won my heart at the first interview; but have now my whole soul; your person, your face, your mind, I wou'd not exchange for that of any other woman breathing.

Hardy. Cousin Racket, I wish you a good husband with all my heart. Mr. Flutter, I will believe every word you say, these twelve months. Mr. Villers (*shaking his head*) I say, we have manag'd this affair very well. I'll order out every drop of my forty-nine, and invite the whole parish of St. George's, but what I'll drink it out, except about a dozen bottles, which I will keep under three double locks for a christening, which I foresee will happen within these twelve months.

Dor. Charming! charming creature!

Let. Congratulate me, my dear friends; can you conceive my happiness?

Hardy. No, congratulate me, for mine is the greatest.

Flut. No! congratulate me, that I have escap'd with life, and give me some sticking plaister; he has torn the skin off my throat.

Sir Geo. I expect to be among the first who is congratulated, for I have recover'd one angel, Doricourt, whilst you have gain'd another.

Dor. My charming Letitia, twas a strange perversion of taste that led me to consider the delicate timidity of your deportment as the mark of an uninform'd mind, or inelegant manners. I feel now, it is to that innate modesty English husbands owe a felicity, the married men of other nations are strangers too; it is a secret veil to your charms; it is the surest bulwark to your husband's honour: and curs'd be the hour, thou'd it ever arrive, in which British ladies shall sacrifice to foreign graces—the grace of modesty.

EPILOGUE.

NAY cease, and hear me---I am come to field---
 Whence this night's plaudits, to a thought so old?
 To gain a Lover, hid behind a Mask!
 What's new in that? or where's the mighty task?
 For instance now---What Lady Eab, or Grace,
 E'er won a Lover---in her natural Face?
 Mistake me not---French red, or blanching creams,
 I swoop not to---for those are hackney'd themes;
 The arts I mean, are harder to detect,
 Easier put on, and worn to more effect;---
 As thus-----

Do Pride and Envy, with their horrid lines,
 Destroy th' effect of Nature's sweet designs?
 The Mask of softness is at once applied,
 And gentlest manners ornament the Bride.

Do thoughts too free inform the Vestal's eye,
 Or point the glance, or warm the struggling sigh?
 Not Dian's brows more rigid looks disclose;
 And Virtue's blush appears, where Passion glows.

And you, my gentle Sirs, wear Vizors too;
 But here I'll strip you, and expose to view
 Your hidden features---First I point at you.
 That well-stuff'd waistcoat, and that ruddy cheek;
 That ample forehead, and that skin so sleek,
 Point out good-nature, and a generous heart,
 Tyrant! stand forth, and conscious own thy part;
 Thy Wife, thy Children, tremble in the eye;
 And Peace is banish'd---when the Father's nigh.

Sure 'tis enchantment! See from every side
 The masks fall off!--In charity I hide
 The monstrous features rushing to my view---
 Fear not, there, Grand-papa---nor you---nor you:

*For should I shew your faces to each other,
Not one amongst ye'd know his Friend or Brother.
'Tis plain, then, all the world, from Youth to Age,
Appear in Masks---Here, only, on the Stage,
You see us as we are: Here, trust your eyes;
Our wish to please, admits of no disguise.*

" Indeed I can't declare—though some folks say,
 " She got a hint Sir Hugh had gone astray ;
 " She's long been jealous,—but if things are so,
 " You'll take no notice that I—Oh ! no, no !
 " But pray, my dear, did you observe, last night,
 " Miss Belmour's head?—Observe it !—O the fright !
 " And then old Lady Dowager Tantwyttee,
 " Dress'd like a bride !—O monstrous !—He, he, he !"
 In little harmless chat two acts thus past,
 And some wish'd cher amis dropp'd in at last,
 With glass you ken—as if you did not well know
 Your favourite man sat whispering at your elbow.
 Another, using coquetry's assistance,
 Flirts with all beaux at hand, while at a distance
 Poor Strephon sighs ;—you smile to've cross'd him !
 Yet love him too—Ah, pity but you lost him !
 In backward rows, some Belles, methinks I see,
 Who ken not—smile not—but look plaintively ;
 Come, come, Ladies, cheer up,—a while content ye,
 When war is over, lovers will be plenty.

On nearer view, many demurely sit :
 Aye, these are Belles of wisdom in the Pit ;
 Belles of discernment, who all like the fashion,
 To mix with judges—(hem)—of the tender passion,
 Ladies you've wisely done ; your plan pursue,
 Your heads deprive the Critics of their view :
 And female critics may, when married boast,
 They know so much, they ought to rule the roast ;
 For, though some coxcombs cry—" Good Heav'n protect us !"

" From learn'd wives, that study to correct us !"

Tell such usurpers of all mental fame,
 Wisdom's self was woman—Pallas her name.
 Then keep, ye critic Belles, the men in awe,
 For sense, wit, judgment own no Salique law.

Ye secret Belles ! who chuse the middle station,
 You're next entitled to my observation.

When a lov'd swain invites you to the Play,
 And begs you'll shine below amidst the gay,
 You leer and cry, " dear Sir, we'll snigger be
 " And more at ease in Middle-Gallery."
 To construe which requires no depth of fate,
 'Tis more convenient for a tete-a-tete.
 Besides, should love-sick swains presume to give
 An am'rous squeeze,—which coyly you receive,
 The soft suffusion hurries to the face;
 But hats protect you—and you blush with grace.

And now ye Belles divine, who reign above,
 With Gods that thunder like tremendous Jove;
 That often shew us here their mighty pow'rs,
 Dispensing oranges in golden show'rs;
 Though you're obscur'd in hood-wink'd coils on high,
 Oft a bright Venus sparkles from your sky.
 But list, ye Goddess Belles!—and I shall thunder
 At you in turn, if Gods are not kept under;
 Pray keep them quiet—act and rule like Juno,
 Who govern'd Jupiter—as, doubtless, you know.
 Ah, happy Belles!—you freely love and laugh,
 'Tis you can Whiskey Punch and Porter quaff;
 Can gaze and smile on mortals here below,
 Whilst drollest humour from their Godships flow;
 Whistling, crowing, barking, singing, humming,
 Groaning, stamping, rapping, clapping, drumming:
 Our strummers, here, ar'nt half so musical,
 Nor all our Players half so comical.
 Well, well, I indulge you we are ever willing,
 " Happy your purse contains the splendid shilling."

And now, ye sprightly Belles! where'er ye sit,
 Accept this wish, before my theme I quit;
 May all get husbands, ever kind and gay,
 Husbands, wh'ill often bring you—to the Play.

